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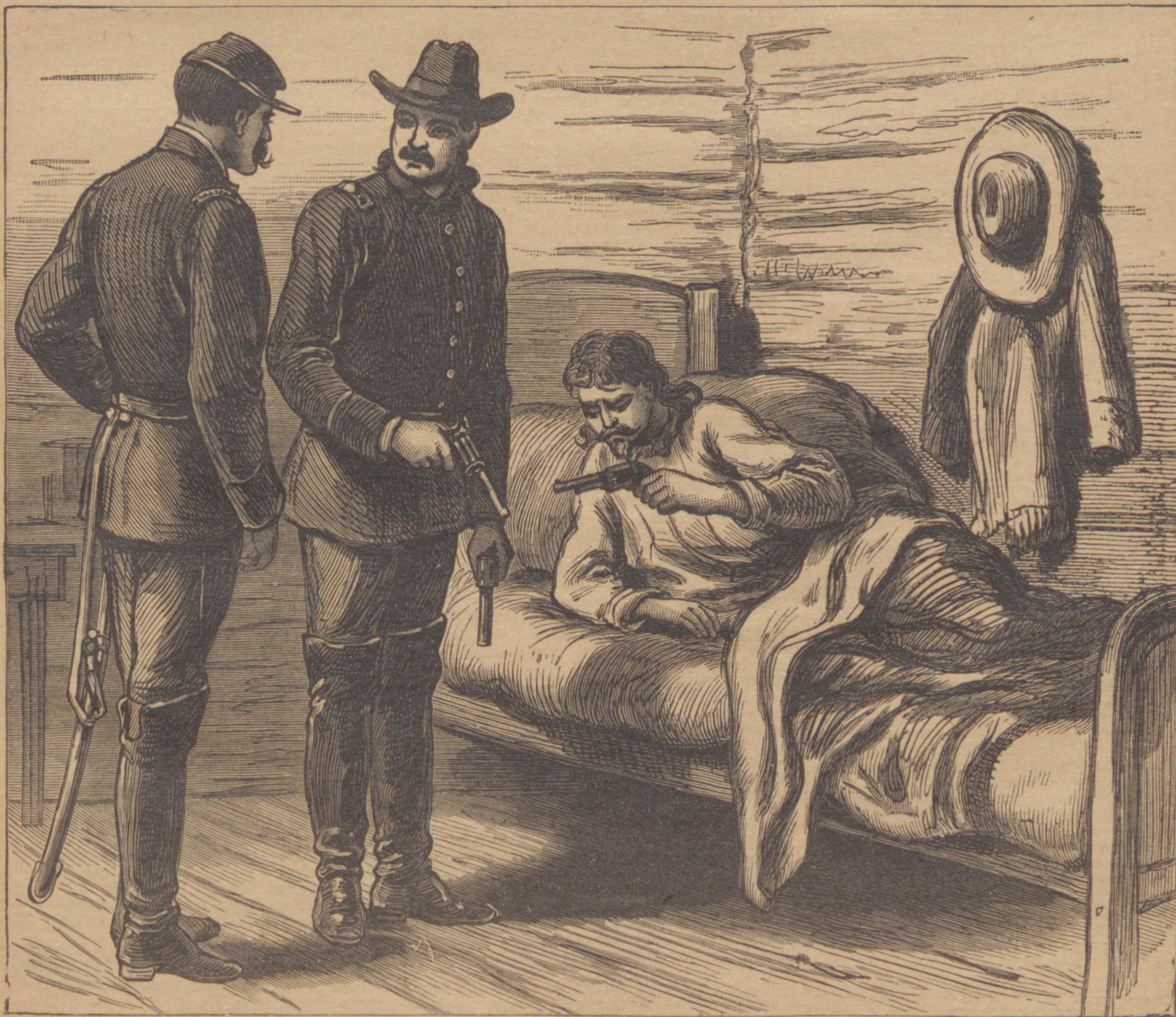
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Buffalo Bill's Double; or, The Desperado Detectives

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,

AUTHOR OF THE "BUFFALO BILL" NOVELS, "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MONTEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," ETC., ETC.



"WHY, THIS IS MY PISTOL, FOR HERE IS MY NAME," CRIED BUFFALO BILL, IN ALARM.

Buffalo Bill's Double; OR, The Desperado Detectives.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

A SOLDIER'S DUTY.

"A LETTER for you, Lieutenant Damar, and it is so important that it was sent by special courier," said a horseman who had just drawn rein in a military camp on the far frontier.

The man had ridden hard, and had not come unscathed from his long ride, as the sleeve of his buckskin jacket was stained with blood from a wound, an arrow still clinging in the flesh, while the animal he rode was bleeding from a bullet-shot in the neck.

The one he addressed was a young man of twenty-three, with a tall, commanding form set off by a handsome fatigue uniform with the straps of a lieutenant upon the shoulders.

His face was not one to forget easily, for it was indelibly stamped with resolve, daring almost to carelessness, and yet with a calm consciousness of power.

The eyes were strangely fascinating in expression, as soft as a deer's in tender moods—as fierce as an angry tiger's in excitement.

He was seated in a tent with a party of brother officers when the courier dashed up, bearing the letter from the fort, and which had been deemed of sufficient importance by the colonel-commanding to send a special messenger with it after the scouting party of three companies of cavalry which were penetrating into the Indian country.

"My good fellow you are wounded, I see, and have had a hard ride of it. Surgeon Powell, will you kindly look to him, while I see what my letter contains that is so important?" and Lieutenant Duke Damar turned to a handsome man who was seated in the tent with him, and who, then a surgeon in the army, is now known to fame as Doctor Frank Powell.*

"Certainly, Damar, and I hope your letter will contain no ill-tidings," answered Surgeon Powell as he stepped to the side of the courier and aided him to alight.

The note was from the colonel commanding the fort, merely stating that the letter was marked "most important," and so he had forwarded it at once by special courier.

"It is my father's hand; but, oh! how tremulous!" said Damar, as he broke open the letter, which bore, in addition to the address the words:

"Most important! Don't delay delivery!"

Dropping into a chair Lieutenant Damar read, written in a hand that was scarcely legible:

"SEA VALE HALL,
July 1st, 18—.

"MY VERY DEAR SON:—

"Come to me at once, for I need you more than you can ever know.

"The hand of Death is upon me, and my days are numbered, so do not delay a moment; spare no expense, endure any hardship, to come to me ere I die.

"This is an appeal from your dying father, Duke, for I must see you ere too late.

"Come! Your Father,

"DELANCY DAMAR."

The young officer sprang to his feet and his voice rung out sharp and stern:

"Spur, quick! My horse and yours, for we start to the fort immediately," and turning to his superior officer, Captain Price, who was also in the tent, he handed him the letter and continued:

"Captain, I regret to leave you, sir, but you will give me leave under the circumstances."

"By all means, my dear Damar, and you have my sympathy, with hopes for the best; but you cannot start now, as night is coming on and you know we are surrounded with red-skins."

"Captain, if there was a tribe of Sioux around us, I would not refuse that appeal," was the decided response.

"Well, take your company as an escort through the Indian lines."

"No, sir, for were your force weakened the red-skin scouts around us would report it, and your camp would be attacked in force.

"Spur and I can make it, for you know I am a pretty good borderman."

"I will return with you, sir," said the courier, whose wounds the surgeon was examining, but he added:

"It was a rough ride, sir, and the speed of my horse alone saved me, for the Indian scouts are thick about the camp."

"No, my good fellow, I will not ask it of you, and you shall not be forgotten for the brave ride you have made.

"And, Spur, now I think of it, I will go alone."

And he turned to his negro servant, who was rapidly packing up his master's traps and his own.

"No, sah, Mars' Duke, you don't go alone, for what you can risk I can, sah," was the servant's reply, and Captain Price said, with a laugh:

"You are under orders, Damar, so must obey."

"Yas, sah, cap'n; he don't go without me, sah."

And all who knew Spur well were convinced that no danger could deter him from going with his master, to whom he was most faithful and had been a privileged servant.

"As Captain Price does not intend breaking camp for several days I will be glad, with his permission, Lieutenant Damar, to accompany you," said one who just then entered the tent.

The speaker was William F. Cody, now known the world over as Buffalo Bill.

Over six feet in height, with broad shoulders, a slender, sinewy form, and clad in buckskin hunting-shirt and leggings, top-boots, and wearing a large-brimmed slouch hat of gray felt, he was a man among men.

His face was one to admire for its beauty as well as its perfect manhood and strength.

His long, waving hair, falling upon his shoulders, gave him something of an effeminate look unless one gazed squarely into his expressive, bold face.

His movements were quick and decided, his voice full and commanding and he was armed with a belt of weapons which no man on the border knew better how to use.

As chief of scouts he had gone with the squadron on their reconnaissance, and his skill as a trailer—daring in danger with perfect knowledge of the Indian character and thorough mastery of all arts of plaincraft, made him invaluable to the military on the frontier.

"Ah, Cody, it is just what I would expect from you, but I will not ask it," said Duke Damar.

"I can be doing good service also for Captain Price while with you by discovering just what the red-skins are up to, so I'll be with you at once—that is, if the captain does not say no."

"Cody, it is just what I wished to ask you, only I feared the danger was so great you might get killed or captured."

"Then I will go, sir," decided Cody.

"Permit me to even up odds, Damar, by also going along to return with Cody," and Surgeon Powell entered the tent, having finished dressing the wound of the courier.

"I fear I am getting you into terrible danger, Surgeon Powell, and you, Buffalo Bill; but I must go if I go alone, and I thank you for your kindness in my behalf, I assure you."

"Then Buffalo Bill and myself will see you safely through the Indian line, reconnoiter to-morrow and run back into camp to-morrow night. But, gentlemen, as it is getting dark let us be off as soon as possible," urged Powell.

Half an hour after, four horsemen rode out of the camp and started upon their perilous break through the scattering line of Sioux scouts which had encircled the soldiers to watch their movements, pick of a sentinel, or stampede their stock as opportunity offered.

CHAPTER II.

A COMRADE'S FRIENDSHIP.

THE four were followed by the good wishes of the hundred and fifty officers and men who comprised the battalion, for all knew well how desperate was the danger they had to face.

Buffalo Bill took the lead; then came Surgeon Powell and Lieutenant Damar side by side, with Spur bringing up the rear.

All carried their repeating-rifles in hand, ready to fire on the instant, and their progress was slow and guarded.

"They'll be on the lookout for us, so we must be ready to let drive at them the moment we are discovered," said the scout, and his watchful eyes were fixed ahead with a look that seemed to penetrate the darkness for a long distance.

Suddenly the scout halted.

They were half a mile from the camp, and were in a little glen. Beyond was the open prairie, a mile away, and once there they felt that escape was an easy matter.

A moment of suspense and intense silence; then came a wild yell of alarm, from a red-skin throat, and it found echoes from scores of others!

But above the Indian cries rung out the clear command of Buffalo Bill:

"Charge through and let them have it!"

The repeating-rifles of Cody, Powell, Damar and Spur rattled viciously as the four dashed forward to ride through the ambush.

The red-skins' strongest point had been struck, where it was supposed they would be weakest; but, just there and then, they were holding a council of war that night, and thus it happened.

The braves were surprised, while the four horsemen were looking for danger, though not expecting to dash upon half a hundred warriors in a group.

Down upon them the party rode, their rifles rattling forth flame and lead. For an instant it was a scene of terrific excitement, for the mustangs of the Indians were stampeded in fright, and their riders seemed to fear that the whole battalion of cavalry was upon them.

Death marked the path of the daring quartette of riders, and they had swept over and on before the amazed Sioux knew their force or their intention.

A few who had their ponies by the stake-ropes, mounted and pursued, but the greater number were thrown into disorder, and were trying to find their mustangs and to be ready to repulse an enemy.

The flying horsemen sent a hail of bullets back upon their enemy and so checked pursuit, and then they swept on like the wind, Buffalo Bill leading on a zigzag course which he knew the Indians would be unable to follow by night.

Thus a mile had been gone over, and the scout led the way into a canyon and halted.

"Pards, I got it a little bad back yonder, so I can't go any further."

A cry of alarm broke from the lips of Duke Damar as he saw Buffalo Bill reel in his saddle, and, but for the grasp of Surgeon Powell's strong arm, the daring scout would have fallen from his horse.

"My poor Cody! You are indeed hard hit, for you are no man to mind trifles," said Powell in deep feeling.

Bill was helped from his saddle and placed upon the ground.

"Powell," decided the lieutenant, "Cody must have aid, for he cannot go on, nor can he return alone. I will bring aid from the camp."

"Bravely said, my dear Damar; but to return would be madness, so I will look to this wound and then we must go on. It is our only chance."

"No; I will bring aid."

And unheeding the call of Powell and the entreaty of Spur for him not to go, Duke Damar dashed off like the wind on his desperate ride back to camp.

They heard the beat of his horse's hoofs, then wild yells, shots and a ringing cheer.

"By Heaven! he has broken through, Spur!" cried Powell, as he turned again to the scout and bared his shoulder to examine the wound as best he could in the darkness.

Soon in the far distance they heard cheers, which told them that the lieutenant had reached camp, and ere long came the heavy pounding of many hoofs, scattering shots, wild war-cries and the cheers of cavalymen.

"Ho, Powell!"

"Ay, ay, brave Damar, we are here!" returned the Surgeon Scout as the lieutenant dashed up, followed by half a hundred cavalymen.

"Here is help; but, how is Cody?"

"He has fainted from loss of blood; but I have stanchd the bleeding and hope the wound will not prove serious."

"Thank God! but you must get him at once to camp."

"Yes."

And the surgeon called to several soldiers to form a litter.

Then, as they were ready to return, he said to the officer in command:

"Bentley, tell my assistant surgeon to do all in his power for Cody, and that, after seeing Damar well on his way, I will return."

"This is madness, Powell, for the Indians are so aroused that you, alone, could never get back into camp. But where is Damar?"

"He was nowhere visible."

"And Spur?"

"He too had gone!"

Quietly the young lieutenant and the negro had slipped away when the former had come back with the company of cavalry to the aid of Buffalo Bill.

All understood his motive was not to have Powell leave the wounded scout and risk his life to go further into peril with him.

Which way the officer and his faithful servant had gone no one could tell; they had silently vanished in the darkness.

There was but one thing for the soldiers to do—to fight their way back to camp with the wounded scout.

As the order was given to advance, far out upon the prairie were seen bright flashes, then the report of fire-arms came to their ears, with a few yells, and after that utter silence.

"They have cut their way through," decided Powell.

"How do you know?" asked Lieutenant Bentley.

"Had they been killed or captured the red-skins would make night hideous with their shouts. Damar has gotten through the outer line, and now it is a chase, and both he and Spur are well mounted. That firing out on the prairie has been in our favor, for it has attracted the attention of the Sioux; so let us push on!"

The command now moved slowly forward, the men who were bearing Buffalo Bill walking in the center of the square formed by the cavalymen.

There were a few dashes of mounted warriors, a shower of arrows, some pistol-shots and here

* Doctor Frank Powell in his life on the border has won the names of the "Surgeon Scout," "Magic Medicine Man," "Dare Devil Doctor," and "White Beaver," Chief of the Winnebagoes.—THE AUTHOR.

and there a soldier fell dead or was wounded; but the brave band moved slowly and steadily on, and though as they neared the camp the Sioux pressed them close they entered the temporary breastworks thrown up and were safe.

Buffalo Bill had been saved by the daring and friendship of Duke Damar, who was then facing death to go to his dying father.

CHAPTER III.

RUNNING A DEATH-GANTLET.

WHEN Duke Damar had seen that the scout yet lived and knew that the cavalymen would carry him safely back into the camp, he decided to slip away and go on by himself.

He did not wish Surgeon Powell to leave Buffalo Bill, while, also, he did not care to have him risk his life in serving him.

Spur too he was anxious to get away from, as he did not care to have the faithful fellow placed in such peril merely to keep him company; so he quietly drew off in the darkness and rode away on his dangerous undertaking.

He had gotten about half a mile, from where he had left the soldiers when, suddenly he beheld a party of horsemen not a hundred feet from him.

That they must be red-skins, he was in no doubt, so at once opened fire with his repeating-rifle and pressed forward.

He was not seen by the red-skins until his rifle began to flash; then, with wild yells they rode toward him, for they saw but one man and deemed him at their mercy, for they were a score.

Just then the horse of the young soldier stumbled, and, unable to recover himself, fell.

Damar, agile as a cat, lit upon his feet, sprung to his horse, seized the rein as he rose to his feet and then opened fire upon the red-skins, now almost upon him.

Down went a couple of mustangs; a warrior fell from his horse; another was wounded, but the Sioux felt sure of their game and pressed on.

Damar felt that his time had come to die; but he would die as a brave soldier should, and he threw the strap of his now empty rifle over his shoulder and drew his revolvers.

Just then there came a rattle of firearms close at hand, a wild cry, half-yell, half-roar, and Spur, the faithful negro, dashed up to the astonished lieutenant's rescue!

The coming of the negro was as much a surprise and delight to Duke as it was an alarm to the red-skins, for they broke in disorder, believing that the troopers were at hand.

"Quick, Mars' Duke, jump on your horse, sah, and let us git!" cried Spur.

Vaulting into his saddle Damar dashed off with Spur.

Both horses were fine ones, and ran along side by side like the wind, while the Indians, discovering their mistake, dashed on, in chase.

The ground was uneven, and the pursued had to pick their way and the red-skins followed at an advantage.

The open prairie was reached, and the fugitives felt sure of escape, for there they could force their horses to greater speed.

The red-skins knowing this urged their ponies, and dashing to the top of the hill that sloped down to the prairie, delivered a volley of rifle-shots and arrows at the two fleeing men.

Down went the horse of Damar, falling heavily, dead ere he fell.

His rider was thrown, not unhurt, by the fall, though an arrow stuck in his shoulder.

Springing to his feet he tore the arrow out of the wound, for it was not deep, and turned to his companion.

There lay poor Spur, full length upon the ground, silent and motionless, while his faithful horse stood near, trembling with fright.

"My God! poor Spur is killed! but I will avenge him," cried the young lieutenant, as he threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired upon the advancing red-skins.

"Poor, poor Spur!" and the officer, after emptying his rifle turned again to the negro, bending over and laying his hand upon his breast.

He had the satisfaction of seeing that his fire had been fatal to at least one warrior, but the rest were rushing upon him, and bullets and arrows began to fly thickly about him.

To remain was to meet certain death; and as he could do Spur no earthly service he leaped upon the negro's horse and dashed away. The noble animal fairly flew over the level prairie, no longer fearing a fall, and he quickly dropped his pursuers out of sight.

"The wound I have received is nothing, unless the arrow-point was poisoned, and that I will soon know.

"If not, I have an open way now to the fort; but poor, faithful Spur! he lost his life for my sake.

"Ah, me! what a cruel life a soldier leads; but, good horse, you must strike a slower pace than this, or you will wind yourself."

And drawing the animal down to a walk, the young officer began to reload his rifle, while his heart was full of sorrow at the wounding of Buffalo Bill and the death of his faithful companion and servant, Spur.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHOT FROM THE CEDARS.

ALONG a highway leading through a beautiful country and winding toward the shores of Long Island Sound a horseman was riding toward the close of the day some two weeks after that wild race for life over the prairies of the Far West.

The horseman was that same gallant young officer, who had reached the vicinity of his home and was urging his tired horse to quickly cover the short distance that remained between him and Sea Vale Hall.

He had escaped the perils of the border, reached the fort, had his wound dressed, and hastened on to catch a stage-coach on the Overland which would bear him to the nearest railroad station.

He had spared no expense, undergone all fatigue, and, at last, pale and haggard had reached the town nearest to Sea Vale Hall.

There he had procured a horse and kept on for his home at a rapid pace.

Would he be too late?

If so, had he not done all in his power to answer that earnest appeal of his dying father to come to him?

The country through which he rode was beautiful in the extreme. Here and there was a large and comfortable farm-house, and, as he neared the coast of the beautiful Sound, many villas of the rich dotted the hill-tops and valleys.

He had telegraphed his coming, and asked for reply to head him off upon the road; but he had perhaps ridden too rapidly for reply to reach him as he had requested.

Now he would soon be at dear old Sea Vale; its grand turrets must soon come into view.

He had never known a mother's love, and his indulgent, noble father had been all in all to him.

Into a bit of woodland, situated upon the crest of a hill he came upon a picturesque little burying-ground, a spot he well knew, for there rested the remains of several generations of Damars, and other graves with neighboring family names were also there.

He was about to ride on when his eye fell upon a procession winding up the slope. He could see the solemn march of those coming, the draped hearse, the carriages following and strung out in a long line, appearing like some army-train winding along the valley.

The procession came from the direction of Sea Vale! Could it be that it was his own father's burial?

The thought made him sick at heart.

He was about to spur forward, when he checked the impulse, not caring to meet that long line of mourners.

Surely there must be some one in the little burying-ground awaiting the coming of the dead, who could tell him who it was that he awaited for.

Wheeling his horse he rode into a thicket, hitched the animal and leaping the stone wall approached the spot where the Damar tomb rose above the more humble ones about it.

There was no need to ask, had there been any one there to question as to who was dead. The grave was in the Damar inclosure.

For whom could it have been dug but for the body of his father?

He shrunk back among a group of cedars and awaited, for the sable plumes of the hearse were now in sight coming over the brow of the hill.

At the same moment several workmen were visible coming along the path which led down the slope toward Sea Vale.

They were the men who had dug the grave, those who were to fill it in after the body had been put within its last earthly resting-place.

A glance told him that one of the men was the head gardener at Sea Vale Hall, and he bowed his head in grief.

Silently he stood, while the procession filed up to the little gate; the coffin was taken from the hearse and the mourners assembled about the open grave.

There were in the group of mourners, those who held kindred ties to the dead man, a woman of stately form clad in deepest black, and she leant upon the arm of a young man of twenty-five.

Then there was a young girl, also in sable weeds, and with her heavy veil thrown back from a face that was very beautiful, though the eyes were dimmed with tears, the lips quivering with grief.

She leant upon the arm of an elderly gentleman, and also at her side stood a young man, tall, commanding, and with a face most striking.

Around there were the neighbors and friends of the dead master of Sea Vale, and that he was loved by all the saddened faces of those in attendance showed.

The deep voice of the minister broke the silence, as he read the burial service, and the dull sound of the earth falling upon the coffin, accompanying the words:

"Dust to dust, ashes to ashes," told that the end was near.

Then came the funeral chant from many lips, rolling away through the woodland with the melody of the pealing notes of an organ, and

the dead was at rest; the cortege of mourners turned away, the last loiterer left the scene, growing dim under the approaching shadows of night, when out of the gloom of the cedars stepped the form of Duke Damar.

With uncovered head he approached the new-made grave, hidden beneath its wealth of flowers, and in filial respect and deepest grief he knelt upon the damp earth, while from his lips came the words:

"Too late! Alas, too late! But, God knows, my dead father, I tried hard to see you ere you died—to reach your bedside and receive your dying blessing."

For some moments he knelt there, while the shadows deepened about him.

Then he started to rise, but, as he did so, a flash illumined the cedars, a sharp report rung out and the young officer fell across the grave of his father.

Out of the cedars bounded a form, and it bent over the prostrate soldier for a moment, then turning disappeared in the gloom of the woodland.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEIRS OF A MILLIONAIRE.

SEA VALE HALL was certainly a very grand old home.

It had been the abode of the Damars for over a century, the first of the family in America having come from France, an exiled nobleman.

He had married an American girl, and was a man of proud bearing, stern and inclined to keep to himself.

From Baron Damar had descended the others of the Damar family, until Duke, the fifth generation, was supposed to be the sole heir to Sea Vale Hall and the very large fortune accompanying it.

Duke Damar was an only child, and his father had been glad to make a soldier of him, and was most happy in discovering that his anticipated fortune had not spoiled him.

He had stood well up in his class at West Point, had been liked by both professors and fellow-students, and since his service as an officer on the frontier had greatly distinguished himself.

He was of a noble nature, ever generous, proud, and yet never looking down upon those beneath him.

Then, he was a typical soldier, a superb horseman, a dead shot, and could sing a good song and tell a story with a spirit of fun to convulse one with laughter or a pathos that would bring tears.

Such was Duke Damar, who had tried so hard to reach his father ere he died and who had fallen across the grave of his dead parent from the shot fired at him by some one in the cedar thicket.

Sea Vale had been added to and improved by each generation, until at the time of the death of Mr. Damar, the father of the young soldier, it had become the most lordly mansion and valuable estate in those parts.

Its lawns were like velvet, its parterres of flowers unsurpassed and its beautiful grounds sloped down to the waters of Long Island Sound.

The mansion contained some forty rooms, rambed away into numerous wings, and was overshadowed by several massive-looking towers which gave it the appearance of a castle.

There were broad piazzas, bay-windows, alcoves and balconies that added to its architectural beauty, and within it was furnished with a degree of magnificence which was the wonder of even the wealthiest dwellers in the neighborhood of the mansion.

At the time of his death Mr. Damar had dwelling with him his widowed sister, Mrs. Ruth Regis, a handsome, well-preserved lady of forty-four, and as stately and aristocratic looking as a queen.

Mrs. Regis had had a sad life, for she had eloped when but sixteen with her music-teacher, and only long years after had her brother found her out in her distress and taken her and her daughter to his home to live, telling them to consider it as their own.

Sweet Nellie Regis, the daughter, was but twelve years of age when she had gone with her mother to dwell at Sea Vale Hall, and her handsome cousin Duke, then a cadet, had welcomed her as a sister.

There was also another dweller at Sea Vale Hall, in the person of a nephew of Mr. Damar, after whom he had been named, Delancy Damar Redfield.

Delancy was the son also of a widowed sister of Mr. Damar, who had married well, but whose husband having lost his fortune by indorsing for pretended friends, had taken his own life and left his wife and son to the care of his old friend, Delancy Damar.

The widow had not long survived her husband, and the boy had been taken to Sea Vale and became as an adopted son of the generous owner of that estate. He had been sent to college by his uncle, and, at twenty-one, for he was the senior of Duke by several years, returned to Sea Vale to serve as private secretary to Mr. Damar and manager of the estates.

Mr. Damar had always said that he would handsomely remember Nellie Regis and Delancy Redfield in his will, and not forget his sister, either, who had been most devoted to him in his latter days.

Death came at last stalking into the elegant home of old Delancy Damar, and its icy finger took the master from his accustomed place.

After the funeral the mourners returned to the mansion and later on in the evening assembled in the spacious and luxurious library, where a large lamp made the room look cheerful.

There were present those seen as mourners at the grave, the stately lady in black, who was Mrs. Ruth Regis, the sister of the deceased, the elderly gentleman, who was Vance Hilton, Esquire, the attorney for the estate, Nellie Regis, Delancy Redfield, the niece and nephew, and a man of thirty, with a pale, strangely interesting face whom rumor had it was to marry Nellie when she left school.

These five had assembled there to hear the will of the dead man read, according to his wish that it should be made known to those interested the day of his burial.

His son had been telegraphed to by the lawyer, and also written to, but no word of reply had come, and, as he was known to be on the far frontier, it was supposed that he was beyond the reach of wires and mails.

"As I must return to the city to-morrow, I wish now to read the will of your departed kinsman, and my friend, and when Duke comes, as he doubtless must soon, he can see it at my office," said the lawyer, and all was at once deep attention to that which they were to hear.

After a few preliminary lines, the lawyer read as follows:

"I hereby bequeath to my only child, my dearly loved son Duke, the mansion of Sea Vale Hall and its adjoining estate, with one-third of the value of all the rest of my fortune, excepting the sum of fifty thousand dollars now in the Bank of New York at interest, said interest to be paid quarter-annually to my sister, Ruth Regis, *nee* Damar, for life, and at her death to go with the estate of Sea Vale.

"To my good nephew and adopted son, Delancy Damar Redfield, I give one-third of my fortune outside of Sea Vale Estate and the money in bank above named.

"To my much-loved niece and adopted daughter, Helen Regis, I give one-third of my fortune, exclusive of the Sea Vale Estate and money above named in bank.

"To my faithful attorney, Vance Hilton, I leave one-half of the money now in the Bank of Boston, Massachusetts, the other half to be divided among my servants herein named."

Then followed the names of the servants, and afterward there was a codicil to the will which read:

"In case of the death of my son, or either one of the three principal heirs herein named, their share of my fortune is to revert equally to the two remaining.

"Should two be called away by death, the survivor to receive all, in case neither had married, in which case it would go to his or her children.

"This would include Sea Vale Estate, which would go to the surviving heir or heirs, in case of the death of my loved son, Duke Damar, which Heaven forbid!"

Just as the lawyer finished the last words of the will the door opened and into the room came Duke Damar, his uniform dirt-begrimed, his face stained with blood.

CHAPTER VI.

A MYSTERY.

THE entrance of Duke Damar was a great surprise, a shock to those present, and all sprung to their feet.

He was pale as death, his face was blood-smeared, and his uniform was covered with mud.

He seemed to have entered the room with no consciousness of who was there, and it was no wonder that Mrs. Regis uttered a startled cry, while the others gave vent to expressions of alarm and amazement.

Nellie Regis, as Helen was familiarly called, was the first to gain presence of mind, and she sprung toward the soldier with the words:

"Oh, Cousin Duke! What a home-coming! What has happened to you? You are hurt and suffering! Sit here, for you seem weak!"

He made no resistance as she led him to an easy-chair, while the others now seemed to regain their nerve and gathered around him.

His appearance was that of a man half-dazed, but he collected himself with an effort and said:

"I am hurt, for some one shot at and wounded me here in the head.

"See, I have his pistol here in my pocket.

"But, oh, Nellie! my poor father is dead?"

"Yes; uncle died two days ago, and was buried not an hour ago," answered Nellie, sadly.

"I know it, for I saw the funeral procession coming while on my way here and from among the cedars witnessed all."

"Mother, Cousin Delancy, will you, will you not get aid for Duke, for do you not see that he needs it?"

Thus sharply called to themselves, those pres-

ent sprung to obey; the village doctor was sent for and the young officer was aided to a lounge and lay down.

Fortunately, the servant met the doctor going by the gateway, and he came hastily in to see the wounded man.

"A close call, for the bullet struck you on the frontal-bone and glanced, fortunately running up under the scalp and cutting its way out just here at the top of your head.

"Had your head been raised a trifle more, Duke, the ball would have crashed through it; but as it is, the shot stunned you, and though you feel a little dazed, rest will soon bring you round, for you are not easy to kill from all reports," said the doctor.

"But who fired the shot, who was the assassin?" asked Duke Damar, feeling better after the draught given him by the old doctor, who had practiced in the family at Sea Vale for many years.

"Doubtless a stray shot from some hunter," said Mr. Hilton, the attorney.

"No, sir; for what hunter could be firing there at twilight? That shot came from an ambush from the cedars!" declared the young officer, fiercely.

"Do not worry about it now, cousin, but try and be quiet, and to-morrow we will find out if it was an intended assassin or not," said Nellie.

"Yes; I must not think of self now, especially as I feel that I am coming round all right. Tell me of my poor father, and why I was not sent for sooner."

"I both wrote and then telegraphed you, Lieutenant Damar, that your father was failing and that it would be well for you to hasten home," said the attorney.

"And I received no letter or telegram, sir."

"But my letter, Duke?" said Mrs. Regis, who was regaining her composure.

"I had no letter from you, Aunt Ruth."

"You amaze me, for I wrote fully, how your father suddenly began to fail, and I addressed it to the fort."

"I never received it, but then there were several pony-riders with the mail killed by the Indians. But I did receive a letter from my father, and that brought me at once."

"A letter from your father?" asked Mrs. Regis.

"Yes, a few lines, written in a trembling hand, urging me to come at once. The letter was forwarded by special messenger."

And he briefly related the adventures and incidents that followed, and adding:

"By night and day I have pressed on to get here, and procuring a saddle-horse at the town was on the graveyard hill when I saw the funeral cortege.

"I feared that it was my father, so drew back in the cedars and saw and heard all.

"When all had gone I went to the grave and knelt there, with what deep grief you may all understand who know how I loved my noble, generous, best of fathers.

"It was while kneeling there with uncovered head, that I saw a flash from the cedars in front of me, felt the shock and knew no more.

"When I returned to consciousness, it was dark; I felt blood upon my face and my head was in a whirl."

"Poor Cousin Duke," and Nellie bent over and touched her lips to the bandages which the doctor had placed there.

"Tell us all that happened, Duke," urged Delancy Redfield quietly, and his face wore a stern, anxious expression.

"There is little more to tell, other than that I knew I had been purposely shot, and the assassin, believing he had done his work thoroughly, had gone."

"But what motive could any one have had to kill you, Duke?" asked Nellie.

"I do not know."

"Have you no enemy, lieutenant, who might have followed you from the frontier?" asked the lawyer.

"None, sir," was the decided response.

Then came the reply in a thoughtful manner:

"Yes, there is one man who might have a desire to assassinate me; but he would never have followed me this far, I feel certain, when he had every chance he might wish on the border to kill me."

"Still, he is worthy of thought in the matter as the possible guilty one," the lawyer urged.

"But this pistol, sir?"

"What pistol?" quickly asked the attorney.

"This one," and Duke Damar took from his pocket a large revolver, handsomely mounted with silver.

"Is not that your own weapon?"

"No, sir, for my arms are back with my traps at the town."

"Where did you get this weapon?"

"It was in my hand, when I returned to consciousness at the grave," was the reply.

"This looks to me as though the assassin had a desire to have you appear to have taken your own life at your father's grave," the lawyer suggested.

"It certainly looks so, sir. But what is this?"

"Ha! this revolver bears the name of Buffalo Bill engraved on it!"

"By Heaven! there is some deep, damning

mystery here, a mystery that I solemnly vow to fathom," and the young soldier sprung to his feet, while his eyes fairly burned with excitement at his startling discovery.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MIDNIGHT MURDER.

THE discovery of the revolver, with the name of Buffalo Bill upon it, was a cause of almost consternation to the young lieutenant, Duke Damar.

He knew that some one had placed that pistol in his hand, after his supposed assassination, with a view to have it appear that he had taken his own life.

Who placed it in the hands of the officer?

He who had fired the shot could but have dogged his tracks from the far frontier, but for what motive?

Duke Damar could recall no one who would take such trouble and risk, go to such expense to get him out of the way.

He had left the scout wounded and unconscious, in the hands of Surgeon Powell, in the far frontier. He had come East as rapidly as steam, horseflesh and human endurance could bring him, and yet ahead of him was an assassin with a weapon bearing the name of Buffalo Bill—meant to be the instrument of death for him!

No wonder Duke Damar was worried.

The mystery seemed to have cleared his brain of the shock of the pistol-bullet.

All those about him seemed equally in a quandary.

The doctor had given his opinion and reported the patient in no danger, after also dressing the wound in his shoulder made by the Indian arrow.

The lawyer was slow in giving his opinion, but he meditated deeply.

As for Mrs. Regis and the others present they seemed not to know what to think or say.

At last Duke Damar returned to the library from his room, where he had had his wounds properly dressed.

"My friends, let us see if we can solve this mystery," he said, as he sat down upon the lounge, while Nellie arranged the curtains so as to make him comfortable.

"I think," said Mrs. Regis, "that the solution of the mystery is simply that the man whose name is on that pistol is your enemy, dogged you here to kill you and overreached himself in forgetting that he used his own weapon."

"Aunt Ruth, your suspicion is as unfounded as it is unkind. Buffalo Bill is my friend, and I left him lying seriously if not fatally wounded on the prairie, in the hands of the surgeon, when I came here, and he fell in aiding me to break through the red-skin lines," said Duke, warmly.

"Then you must solve the mystery yourself," Duke, Mrs. Regis returned.

"I cannot, for I am all in the dark; but murder will out, it is said, and some day we will know all about this strange affair."

"But there is one present to whom I have not been introduced," and Duke bowed toward the one who had accompanied his cousin and Lawyer Hilton to the grave.

"Ah! I had forgotten, under the excitement, Duke, to present to you the son of an old friend, and a namesake of my late husband—Mr. Regis Rossmore, an artist, now on a visit to Sea Vale, and who has been most kind to us in our affliction," and Mrs. Regis led forward the one upon whom the eyes of the young soldier had more than once fallen.

The dark, fascinating face of Regis Rossmore won his respect and admiration at once, and he warmly grasped his hand while he said:

"I am glad to find you, Mr. Rossmore, a guest at Sea Vale, and hope that you will long remain with us."

"I thank you, Lieutenant Damar, but I fear I shall have to soon tear myself away from your delightful home, as my duties will call me to other scenes," replied Rossmore, in a voice strangely melodious and winning.

"Mr. Rossmore is an artist, Duke, and has found many pretty bits of scenery about Sea Vale to put on canvas," explained Mrs. Regis.

"Mamma had lost sight of him, since his boyhood, Cousin Duke, until one day I was asleep in the hammock in the boat-house, and Mr. Rossmore rowing along the shore saw me. He was out sketching, so drew near and made a perfect drawing of me, and afterward, when he had finished it as a painting, sent it to me as a present, the first I knew of having been caught napping."

"Mother recalled the name, answered the note, and in Mr. Rossmore found the son of an old friend," explained Nellie, and stepping to an easel that stood near, she continued:

"This the painting."

It was a rare work of art, exquisitely done in oil, and the likeness of Nellie Regis was perfect and very lovely, with the long lashes of her closed eyelids falling upon her cheek.

"Mr. Rossmore is indeed an artist," said Duke, gazing at the painting.

Then the lawyer called the attention of all to the fact that he wished to again read the will of

Delancy Damar for the benefit of Duke, who had not heard it.

There were some anxious faces in the group, as they looked upon Duke.

How would he, the true heir, receive the announcement that his father had not left it to him to give aid to his aunt, and cousins, but had divided the large fortune equally between himself, Delancy and Nellie?

The attorney began the reading of the will for the second time, and every eye of the listeners was upon the young soldier rather than upon Vance Willis as he read.

Not a sign betrayed what Duke Damar thought, as he heard that he was to possess not one-third of the fortune he had deemed would be his own.

He waited until the last words were read, and then rising approached his aunt with the remark:

"Aunt Ruth, my noble father has but carried out what I would have had him do for you, and it gives me real pleasure to feel that he has so generously remembered Delancy and Nellie, for they have been brother and sister to me rather than cousins."

"I am more than content."

This was a surprise to all, to see how the young heir took his father's will; but Mrs. Regis's keen eyes thought she detected upon the face of the soldier a look of inward annoyance, and she said to Nellie, half an hour after, when the household had retired for the night:

"Did you note, my child, how your cousin tried to hide his real feelings under pretended acquiescence in the will of his father?"

"You mean that he was displeased, mother?"

"Certainly; he was more than displeased."

"I thought I noticed a change in his face after he had heard the will; but I could not understand it."

"I can, for it was hatred of you, Delancy, and myself, for having shared in his fortune; but I hope he will soon become reconciled to existing circumstances."

Nellie made no reply, but wishing her mother good-night departed for her own room.

An hour after the silence of the night was broken by a wild cry that rung through the house.

It was the cry of "Murder!" uttered in a man's voice, and immediately following came the crack of a pistol and a heavy fall.

Rushing to the scene Lawyer Vance Hilton and Regis Rossmore entered the room of Delancy Redfield, to find him lying upon the floor, a bullet-wound in his head, and over him bent Lieutenant Duke Damar.

"He is dead! some one has murdered him," cried the young soldier as the two men entered the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER SUSPICION.

THE soldier held the head of his cousin on his arm as Lawyer Hilton and Regis Rossmore entered, and said:

"Quick, arouse the servants, while I go in search of the assassin."

Duke Damar was fully dressed, as was also his dead cousin, for Delancy Redfield was dead, the bullet having crashed through his brain.

The window of the room opening upon the balcony was open, and through that the assassin had entered.

"But what is to be done; what clew have we to begin on?" asked the lawyer.

"None other than to first search the grounds and send word to the village to set the constables at work searching for any suspicious character that may be about."

"If you will remain with the body, Mr. Rossmore, I will ask Mr. Hilton to acquaint my aunt and cousin with the sad story of poor Delancy's death, while I set the servants to work in trying to discover the assassin."

And so saying, Duke hastily left the room.

The servants were now aroused, and the whole grounds were searched as well as the boat-house and shores, while word was sent to the village to put the officers of the law upon the scent of the murderer.

An hour after, when Duke Damar re-entered the mansion, he found his dead cousin lying upon the lounge in his room, and over him was thrown a sheet to shut out from view the dead face, marred by the bullet-wound in the temple.

In the room were Mrs. Regis, Nellie and the lawyer, the latter pacing to and fro in thoughtful mood.

"I am glad you have come, Damar, to give us what light you can upon this sad affair," said Mr. Hilton.

"I can give but little, I assure you, sir."

"Poor Delancy and myself came to his room together and talked over matters for a long while. He seemed to think that I was chagrined at my father's will, and I was anxious to convince him that I was not so in the least."

"At last I went to my room, and, as it was late, left his room by the window, then going along the piazza."

"I could not sleep, and was walking to and fro in my room when I heard a cry of murder."

"I almost thought I was asleep and dreaming at first, when a shot came and then I threw up my window and sprang out upon the piazza, for the sound came from that direction."

"I saw that Delancy's window was still up, the light streaming forth, and I ran here to find the poor fellow dead upon the floor."

"Then you and Mr. Rossmore entered and that is all I know about the affair."

The lawyer shook his head and said:

"A most mysterious affair; but we will get at it some day."

"By the way, what did you do with that pistol found in your hand at your father's grave?"

"I carried it to my room, or meant to do so."

"Still it was here, by the side of Delancy's body, and it was the weapon used to kill him with."

"Impossible!"

"It is true, Lieutenant Damar, for one of the chambers only was empty when you had it in the library, and now, see, a second shot has been fired from it."

"It is true. Ha! now I remember, I left it upon the library table."

"No, Duke; I saw you bring it out in your hand when you bade me good-night," said Mrs. Regis.

"I am sure you are mistaken, aunt; but Mr. Rossmore will remember, for we came together as far as the hall leading to this wing of the house."

And turning to the artist, who just then entered, Duke Damar continued:

"Do you recall my having this revolver in my hand, Mr. Rossmore, or did you not see me place it upon the library table before we left the room?"

"You brought it out with you, Lieutenant Damar."

"Indeed? I do not recall having done so; but then, I was so worried as to forget."

"Have you gleaned any news that may point to the murderer?" asked the artist.

"None."

"I heard voices from this room for quite a while after I retired, and they seemed to be in anger. Then I was just dropping asleep, or had been and was awakened, I know not which, by a loud cry followed by a shot," said Rossmore.

"I was in this room with my cousin for some time, and our conversation was a little excited at one time; but I left him in good humor, and soon after heard the cry and shot."

"When I got to the room Delancy was dead; but, here are the officers whom I sent for."

A justice of the peace, a coroner and some jurymen and several officers were then ushered into the room accompanied by the doctor, and all listened attentively to the circumstances of the affair as far as known.

Doctor Kennard gave it as his opinion that the shot had been fired from the window and Delancy Redfield had been in the act of undressing to retire when killed.

He had doubtless caught sight of his assassin aiming at him, and had cried for help when the fatal shot came.

Duke Damar then told what he knew about the affair, the pistol bearing the name of Buffalo Bill was examined and the two empty chambers noted, and the facts elicited as to its having been taken out of the library by the young soldier, or left there, and then the bullet, which was taken from the wound by the doctor, was found to be the counterpart of those remaining in the weapon.

It did not take Damar long to see that suspicion was falling upon him.

His own lawyer, Vance Hilton, even seemed impressed with the proof against him, and saw that his confession of going to his cousin's room, his having an excited conversation with him, and the fact that the revolver bearing Buffalo Bill's name had been in his keeping and another chamber discharged, militated against him.

Then the testimony of the young artist, seemingly given with deepest reluctance, that he had heard loud voices, followed by a shot and fall, and, upon his coming to the room with Lawyer Hilton had found Lieutenant Damar fully dressed bending over his cousin, was also cause for suspicion.

The fact that the wily coroner brought out, that Duke Damar admired his cousin Nellie, but knew that she preferred Delancy to him was brought forward, while also the fact that the millionaire's will left the dead man one-third of his fortune, was another link in the evidence of apparent guilt.

"By Heaven! this testimony seems to be drawn out to try and prove me guilty of this foul crime," suddenly cried Duke Damar, springing to his feet and turning his blazing eyes upon the coroner.

"It is my duty, sir, to hold you as under suspicion of having murdered your cousin; but I hope to Heaven you can prove your innocence of a crime so foul," said the coroner impressively.

A groan broke from the lips of the young soldier, as he sunk back in his chair, and every eye was turned upon him, while Mrs. Regis buried her face in her hands.

"I think, Mr. Coroner, you are going too far in this," cried Rossmore indignantly.

"I am responsible for my actions, sir, and I must arrest Lieutenant Damar," was the stern response.

But, just then, Nellie glided into the room, her face as white as that of the corpse which lay upon the lounge.

"What is that I hear—that you dare to accuse my cousin, Lieutenant Duke Damar, of this murder?"

All gazed upon her in amazement.

"Circumstantial evidence points to his guilt, Miss Regis," answered the coroner.

"So my maid just came and informed me; but let me tell you, sir, that my room is above that of my Cousin Duke's, and I was seated at my window when I saw him come out of poor Delancy's room upon the piazza, bid him good-night and retire to his own chamber."

"I heard him pull down the sash of his own window and could see him pacing to and fro, for his shadow was cast upon the arbor opposite the window, and he was thus engaged when the cry came from Delancy and the fatal shot was fired."

"I was too frightened to move, but I heard Cousin Duke's sash raised saw him run out upon the piazza and enter Delancy's room."

"Can he be accused in the face of this testimony, sir?"

Nellie had spoken in a firm, clear voice, and her beautiful eyes had rested upon the faces of the coroner and his jury.

A murmur ran around the room at her words, and Regis Rossmore uttered a most fervent:

"Thank God!"

"That settles it, Mr. Coroner," said Lawyer Hilton, earnestly.

"It does, sir, and, Lieutenant Damar, I congratulate you," said the coroner, and then he added:

"Miss Regis, your testimony is conclusive, and saves your cousin from arrest, for I doubt not but that he could have cleared himself of the charge, strong as was the seeming evidence against him."

"Gentlemen of the jury, we are to return a verdict that Delancy Damar Redfield came to his death by a pistol-shot, while in his room, said shot having been fired by a party unknown."

So went the evidence, and yet, when it was generally known, there was a lingering suspicion that Duke Damar was guilty, all circumstances being taken into consideration, and it was even hinted that Nellie Regis had perjured herself to save her cousin from the gallows.

CHAPTER IX.

A SECRET BETWEEN THEM.

THE body of Delancy Redfield was laid away in its grave, a few paces only from where lay his uncle.

A vast concourse of people followed the remains to the grave, for the strange murder, the mystery overhanging all, the suspicion cast upon Duke Damar, caused a vast deal of curiosity with every one.

Was it because Mrs. Regis held suspicion against her nephew that she went on the arm of Lawyer Hilton?

Was it for the same reason that Nellie Regis was conducted to the grave by Regis Rossmore, the artist, and Duke Damar went alone?

Such were the questions asked by many.

Alone did Duke Damar stand, white-faced, silent, stern, gazing upon the coffin and then down into the grave, while every eye was riveted upon him.

His face betrayed no emotion, so that what was in his mind no one knew.

What was in his heart no eye could read, and if there was guilt there he did not show it by the tremor of a muscle.

The voice of the clergyman reading the impressive ceremony died away, the grave was filled in and the people moved away from the sacred spot.

As the last one disappeared in the distance, a form came out of the cedars and stood gazing down upon the new-made grave.

Upon one side was the mound of the dead millionaire, covered with fresh flowers, and upon the other the grave of Delancy Redfield, also hidden beneath a mantle of roses.

The one who stood there between the two graves, gazing down upon them was Duke Damar.

His face, now that the gaze of others was not upon it, writhed with emotion, and a groan would force itself from between the tightly-shut teeth.

The sun was going down behind the distant hill-top, and its radiance fell full upon him and revealed how deeply he suffered.

Along the gravel walk leading through the grounds of Sea Vale came another form—out of the rustic gate, across the highway and up the hillside pathway, until the graveyard was reached.

It was Nellie Regis, her face pale and sad, and her eyes red from weeping.

She was clad in deepest black, and advanced

so noiselessly that Duke Damar heard not her coming until he felt her touch upon his arm.

He started and turned almost fiercely upon her; but, seeing who it was, he smiled sadly and said:

"Nellie, you here?"

"Yes, Cousin Duke."

"And why?"

"To seek you."

"What would you with me, Nellie?"

"Oh, Duke, my whole soul goes out in sympathy to you in your sorrow."

"Ah, little woman, I appreciate all that you would say, all that you would feel."

"Ah, Duke, how bitter was this last cruel blow!"

"It cannot be helped, Nellie; but let me say to you now that I believe you saved me from the gallows, for, as it is, I see how people regard me."

"Could I do more, Cousin Duke?"

"Few would have done what you did, Nellie; for you perjured yourself to save me from the gallows!" said the young soldier, solemnly.

"What I did, Duke, is done; so do not let us speak of that again."

"But, Nellie, why did you say what you did?"

"As you just said, Cousin Duke, to save you from the gallows, knowing you to be innocent."

"I shall not forget you, Nellie, never to the day of my death, die how and where I may," he said, impressively.

She was silent for a moment and then asked:

"Will you remain long at Sea Vale, cousin?"

"I think I shall return West at once, Nellie, or just so soon as matters are arranged about the fortune of my father, for Delancy's death now leaves us joint heirs."

Nellie shuddered and replied:

"I wish that you had been the sole heir, Duke."

"Ah, no, for it is best as it is; but you, Nellie, will return to your boarding-school, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And then will make Sea Vale your home again, for I shall not live here for many years."

"I know not what is before me, Cousin Duke, and I only wish that I could tell you a secret; but, alas! I cannot, I cannot!"

And the beautiful eyes of the young girl filled with tears.

"Do not fear to trust me, Nellie."

"I do not fear to trust you, only I cannot make known to you what I would—at least, not now. Some day I may have to do so, but not now, not now. But, come! This is a gloomy place for you, so let us go."

He slipped his hand in her arm and they walked down the path together.

"Have you had any clue yet, Cousin Duke, as to who fired that shot at you?"

"None; but I shall yet find out, Nellie."

For some moments neither spoke, and then the young soldier asked abruptly:

"Nellie, will you tell me the truth if I ask you a question?"

"Perhaps."

"No, say that you will do so."

"What is the question?"

"Say that you will answer me truthfully."

"I will not promise."

"Well, I shall trust to your doing so and ask you."

"Well, Cousin Duke?"

"Did Delancy love you?"

"He said that he did."

"And you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did you love him?"

Her face flushed and then paled, but she made no reply.

"Did you love Delancy, Nellie?"

Her face became stern now, a strange look upon a countenance so beautiful.

"I will answer you, Cousin Duke, that I did not love him!"

"You are sure?"

"I am very sure."

"He asked you to be his wife?"

"He did."

"And your answer?"

"That I would never be his wife!"

"And yet I have always believed that you loved Delancy."

"Loved him? Why, Duke Damar, I hated him," came in decisive accents from her lips.

Duke was startled at her manner and words. He could not understand her, but said:

"That is all I wished to ask, Nellie."

"And you have my answer, Duke."

"Yes, and I am glad that you did not love him," he said.

She glanced at him quickly, while he, after a moment, said:

"Another question, Cousin Nellie."

"Yes?"

"Who is this young artist, Regis Rossmore?"

She started now and asked simply:

"Why?"

"Because I am anxious to know all about one who seems to be regarded so highly by my aunt and cousin."

"His father was an old friend of mamma's, and he was named after papa."

"And what else?"

"He studied art abroad, I believe, and is winning a name as an artist far above the average. He has been a great rover, and is a ranchero somewhere in the West, I believe, coming East at certain times of the year, for he has a studio in New York. He is accomplished, gentlemanly, and has some means, I think."

"More I cannot tell you, Cousin Duke."

"More I cannot ask you."

"Do you like him?"

"Immensely; but here he comes," and their eyes fell upon the tall, commanding form of Regis Rossmore coming up the pathway.

He saluted them in his courtly way, and the three walked slowly on through the gathering twilight to the mansion, where Lawyer Hilton and Mrs. Regis sat upon the piazza awaiting their coming.

CHAPTER X.

THE MIDNIGHT MARAUDER.

"Life here is unendurable. I shall return to my command."

So said Lieutenant Damar one month after his return home, whither he had gone at the earnest appeal of his father to come to him.

That father lay in his grave, and the lips were forever silent as to why he had written that pleading letter to his son.

Delancy Redfield was also in his grave, and not a day passed but what Duke Damar was made to feel that he was his supposed murderer.

His old friends, those who had known him in boyhood, turned a cold shoulder upon him.

His aunt, ever loved so dearly by him, and who had always been most kind to him, acting as a mother, in spite of an effort to appear the same, showed that she, too, believed him guilty.

The lawyer, after having arranged all legal matters, turning over to him and to Nellie, their share of Delancy Redfield's fortune, said that he was glad to get away, for strange thoughts haunted him at Sea Vale.

Those who called at Sea Vale to offer sympathy to its denizens, never asked for Duke!

Nellie had gone back to her school, seemingly glad to get away from the grand old home, though Regis Rossmore remained there, a guest, urged to do so by the young soldier, who in his misfortune found him a true friend.

The artist alone seemed to believe him innocent, and his kind words of sympathy were a balm to the wounds afflicted by others.

So it was that Lieutenant Damar had said that life at Sea Vale was unendurable to him, for, several days before, Regis Rossmore had been forced to depart, called away on business.

Not a line had come to him from the fort, as to the fate of Buffalo Bill, though he had asked Surgeon Powell to write him at once.

"I will start to-morrow to rejoin my command, aunt," he had said one evening.

"It will doubtless be the best for you, Duke," was the cold reply.

The next day he arose early to take his departure, intending to ride to the town on horseback, and send his traps on by wagon.

His aunt begged to be excused, as she was not well, so sent good by by her maid.

Duke bit his lips at this, but made no reply, and, lighting a cigar, he mounted his horse and rode away.

A strange impulse caused him to go by the little cemetery, and for some moments he stood gazing upon the two graves, his head uncovered, his face stern and cold.

Absorbed in his thoughts, he rode slowly along, and seemingly in no haste stopped several hours at a country tavern for dinner and rest.

As he resumed his way he seemed to realize that he should have been already at his journey's end and that night would overtake him before he reached the town.

In a short while clouds began to obscure the heavens and the distant roll of thunder betokened a storm.

Then he rode rapidly on; but the storm-clouds rose swiftly and the lightning played almost incessantly across the skies.

Seeing a large gateway upon his right, he determined to seek the hospitality of the large and comfortable-looking farm-house to which it led.

A gravel drive led to what was a pretentious mansion, with large and handsome grounds about it, a great number of cultivated acres surrounding and extensive outbuildings in the rear.

A servant came forward and took his horse as Duke dismounted, and he reached the piazza just as the rain descended in torrents.

A young lady met him at the doorway, seemingly coming out to look at the storm, for she started at sight of a stranger, while he said:

"Pardon me, but I sought shelter in your home from the storm. My name is Duke Damar, and I am an army officer."

"You are welcome, sir, and will have to accept me as hostess, for my father, Mr. Malcolm, is ill, and my brother, Lieutenant Andrew Mal-

colm, of the Revenue Service, is on his vessel."

She spoke in a perfectly self-possessed manner, though she appeared scarcely over eighteen and invited him into the library with the air of one who meant to make her guest feel at home.

Duke saw that she was lovely in face and form, and when he gazed into her beautiful eyes he felt that he had never beheld a more beautiful woman.

"I trust your father is not seriously ill, Miss Malcolm?" he said.

"No, sir; though helpless with gout, a disease which is an heirloom among the Malcolms," she answered, with a smile.

Then she added, as a servant entered:

"Henry will show you, Mr. Damar, to your room, and supper will be ready in half an hour. I will acquaint my father with your coming, and perhaps he will be able to see you, for we are always glad to have guests at The Retreat, as we call our home."

In half an hour Duke Damar met his fair hostess at supper, and a delightful supper it was, too.

She had changed the walking-suit she had on when he met her, for an evening dress in honor of her guest, and the young soldier felt that her beauty and sweet manner grew upon him.

The storm still raged without. To think of going on that night was out of the question, and so May Malcolm told him in a way that showed she expected to have her way.

"Father will see you, Mr. Damar, after supper, for he will be wheeled into the library in his easy-chair," she said, and soon after Duke was presented to a handsome old gentleman who seemed to be a great sufferer from gout.

He was, however, quite cheerful, gave the young officer a hearty welcome, and soon after left him to be entertained by his daughter.

Several hours thus passed away, May Malcolm singing for her guest in a voice that was well-trained and melodious, and then, telling him that she would see him at his early breakfast, she bade him good-night.

Soon after Duke Damar retired to his room, but not to sleep; so he lighted a cigar and sat down in an easy-chair, where, after a while, he dropped into an uneasy slumber, from which he awakened with a start.

Rising, he went to the window and glanced out.

He heard voices in a whisper, and looking down, beheld two forms in the darkness, entering a window by means of a small ladder.

"That is the room, I think, of Mr. Malcolm. There is some devilry going on there, I am certain."

Instantly taking from his saddle-bags a small pistol, Duke cautiously left his room, descended the broad stairs, where a lamp burning in the hall lighted his way, and going to the wing where the rooms of Mr. Malcolm were located, he listened at the door.

He distinctly heard voices, lowered to suppressed tones within.

Cautiously he tried the knob, but the door was locked; so he went out of the front door, ran around the wing, mounted the step-ladder and sprang into the window.

He was just in time, for he beheld one man standing by the bed in which lay Mr. Malcolm, holding over his head a heavy pillow.

The other was rifling a small desk of its contents, and upon the floor, evidently dead, lay a half-dressed man, the night-nurse of the invalid gentleman.

Into the room sprang Duke, and, quick as a flash, he leveled his revolver at the man at the bedside.

"Hands up, or I fire!" cried the young soldier, in a voice that rung with stern determination to carry out his threat.

The answer was a startled cry from the man and a shot from his comrade which whizzed by the head of the young soldier.

Then Duke Damar's finger drew trigger, and the man who fired the shot, and was preparing to fire again, fell dead.

The other attempted to escape, but Duke threw himself upon him, and, after a fierce struggle, held him securely.

Then into the room dashed May Malcolm, clad in a loose wrapper, and following her came her maid and a man-servant, who had been aroused from their slumbers and hastened to the scene from the adjoining room, for they had tried the hall door and found it securely fastened.

"Miss Malcolm, from my window I saw these two men enter this room, so came around and discovered one striving to smother your father, the other robbing his desk."

"The latter fired upon me and I killed him, and the other is a prisoner, as you see; but I think they have killed your father's night-nurse."

The words were spoken coolly, but rapidly, and May Malcolm sprang to the side of her father, who was conscious, for Duke Damar had thrown the pillow from off his face.

"Do not be alarmed, my child, for I am unhurt, though, but for our brave guest, I would have been killed," he said, faintly.

"I will see to this man's safety, Miss Mal-

colm, while your servants carry off these bodies," and Duke led the prisoner from the room.

He was masked, wearing a close-fitting wire mask which completely hid his face.

As they reached the hallway the man said hoarsely:

"Say, friend, you want to let me go."

"No, sir, you must hang for the murder of the nurse."

"It will be to your interest to let me go, I tell you."

"It will be to my interest to hang you."

"Say, are you sweet on May?"

"How dare you speak thus of Miss Malcolm, sir?"

"Friend, just call Miss Malcolm here."

"No, sir."

"You had better do so, for there are more to regret this night's work than me."

"What do you wish with her?" asked Damar, impressed with the manner of the man.

"Call her."

Duke drew his prisoner with him to the door and knocking, asked a servant who appeared to request Miss Malcolm to come into the library.

She soon did so, and he said:

"Miss Malcolm, this man demands to see you."

"To see me?"

"Yes, for I wish you to tell your lover here to let me go."

"Sir?"

"Don't play tragedy queen, May, but do as I say, for you do not care to see me hang."

"Who are you?" she gasped.

"See!"

He turned his face from Duke Damar as he uttered the word, and removed his mask.

"My God!" broke from the lips of the maiden, and she staggered as though struck a severe blow.

"May, I asked this man to let me go. Won't you make the same request, rather than see me hang?"

"Oh, yes, yes! It would kill father to know who you are. Oh, Lieutenant Damar, please let him go, I beseech you!"

"Go!" and Duke pointed toward the door, as he released his grasp upon the man's shoulder.

"Thank you! Good-by, May!"

The man bounded out of the room as he spoke, and May Malcolm grasped the hand of Duke Damar, while she said:

"Thank you, oh, thank you! Keep my secret, sir, but that man was my eldest brother!"

CHAPTER XI.

BUFFALO BILL'S DOUBLE.

"THE prisoner escaped," was the explanation of Lieutenant Damar, regarding the man whom he had captured.

Assistance had been sent for to the town, and when officers of the law arrived they found that the midnight marauders of the Malcolm homestead had come on horseback to the scene.

One of them certainly knew the place well, for their horses had been concealed in a clump of shrubbery near the house, and the gate leading into a lane, which ran back into a heavy forest, had been propped open.

Then a step-ladder had been taken from an out-house where it was kept, with tools to open the window of the room.

The fugitive had taken both horses in his escape, and turning into a brook had destroyed all trace of which way he had gone.

Mr. Malcolm said he had inhaled something like perfume, and it seemed to lull him to sleep, and a bottle that had contained chloroform was found under the window, while a hole cut in the glass showed that the room had been filled full of the fumes, thus causing partial unconsciousness in Mr. Malcolm and his servant, who slept on a cot near him.

He remembered to have felt a weight upon him, then heard a struggle, a cry, and then realized that he was being murdered.

The pistol-shots he heard, felt the pillow drawn from his face and saw the struggle between Duke Damar and the burglar.

The nurse had been killed with a knife-thrust, and that the escaped burglar had done the deed was proven, as the knife of the dead burglar was in his belt and untarnished.

The desperado had escaped, Duke Damar explained, by springing away from him in the library, and this was not looked upon as unlikely under the circumstances, so the secret lay between the fugitive, the soldier and May Malcolm.

The dead robber had been shot in the forehead, showing deadly aim on the part of the soldier.

After giving his testimony before the coroner's jury, Duke mounted his horse and rode on his way, promising some day to again visit The Retreat.

Not a word did he ask May about her wicked brother, and not a word did she vouchsafe regarding him.

She simply pressed the hand of the soldier in parting, and said:

"You have been so good to me, I will never forget you."

Thus they parted, and Duke went on his way westward.

It was a long, tedious journey, but, at last, the young officer neared the place where he was to leave the train and take the stage-coach to a point where he could get a horse to the fort.

He had heard of increased trouble among the Indians, and was glad that he would have work to do, for his mind was ill at ease.

As he mounted the box with the driver, he asked:

"Any news, driver, from the fort?"

"The Injuns is gittin' a leetle more ugly, sir, so Buf'ler Bill were a-sayin'."

"Buffalo Bill? Then you have seen him?" cried Duke, glad to know that the scout had not died of his wound, as he had feared.

"He went down to Hank's Station on last trip with the reg'lar coach. This is an extra coach you know, cap'n."

"Yes, and I was lucky to catch it, as the regular one does not go until to-morrow night."

"You is, sir."

"Then Buffalo Bill is all right again?"

"Yas, he seemed so, but looked a trifle pulled, arter his wound."

"I am delighted to hear it, I assure you, for Bill was wounded in aiding me to pass through the lines two months ago when I went East."

"Maybe you'll catch him at Hank's, and it will be better, for it hain't pleasant ridin' alone through ther Injun country."

"No; so I will hope to catch Cody at Hank's, for he will hardly start for the fort before to-morrow morning, as you cannot be many hours behind the regular coach."

"About five hours, cap'n," was the answer.

It was just after dark when the coach rolled up to Hank's Ranch, the stage station.

Being an "extra," put on to bring a party of surveyors back from the line, its coming was not expected, and there was no one out in front of the cabin inn to receive it.

The conductor on the train had told him that, when he came down on his run, he had seen Buffalo Bill, as he thought, just getting off of the West-bound cars, but the lieutenant had doubted this, not knowing why the scout would be upon the train from the East, yet, when told by the stage-driver that Buffalo Bill had gone on with the regular stage, a few hours before, he felt sure that the one the conductor saw must have been Cody, and was much pleased to know that he had gotten over his wound.

As he entered the cabin the first one his eyes fell upon was the well-known form of the scout.

"Ho, Cody, I am delighted to see you!" he cried, advancing toward him.

The scout started, turned, and then put out his hand, while he said coldly:

"You are back again, lieutenant?"

"Yes, and most happy am I to see that your wound was not serious."

"Thank you, sir."

"When do you start for the fort, Cody?"

"At dawn in the morning, sir."

"I'll go with you, for I'll get a horse here."

"I'll see that you are called in time."

"Then I shall retire at once, as I am not well."

"You look worn, sir; but, may I ask, did you find your father well, sir?"

"I found him dead, alas! but I have much to tell you, Cody, and a remarkable circumstance about one of your pistols; but I'll tell you to-morrow."

The scout bowed and departed, while Duke Damar muttered:

"Buffalo Bill seems very distant. Can he blame me for the wound he received, I wonder?"

The next morning the soldier was awakened early, but the landlord told him that Buffalo Bill had gone the night before, leaving no word for him.

Slightly angered at the manner of the scout toward him, Lieutenant Damar mounted the horse secured at the station and rode on his way alone toward the fort.

He had gone but a few miles when he saw a horse and rider in the trail before him.

He knew that he was in constant danger from Indians and road-agents, and so he advanced cautiously.

As he drew nearer he saw that the one before him was an Indian girl, gorgeously decked out in feathers and beads, and with her wealth of hair hanging down her back and resting upon her horse.

Her face was painted, and it, as well as her form, seemed to be very beautiful.

The soldier was surprised and involuntarily raised his hat.

"The pale-face warrior is on a trail that will lead him to death! Let him follow the Red Rose and she will lead him by another trail to the fort."

The Indian girl spoke in good English, and the lieutenant was amazed.

"Why can I not continue on this trail to the fort, for it is nearest?"

"The Red Rose has said that death is on this trail. Does the pale-face fear to follow one who would save his life?"

"No."

"Then come!"

She led the way off the trail, her pretty black pony going along at a canter.

For miles she went along, making no reply to the questions of Duke, until at last she halted.

"See! there lies the trail you were on; but you have passed the death-ambush. Go!"

And with a wave of her hand she was off and Duke Damar, completely mystified, rode slowly on his way once more.

It was sunset when he reached the fort, but the welcome he received was a cold one. Something seemed to keep his friends aloof from him; but there was one who came to his quarters and greeted him in a friendly way, and that person was Surgeon Frank Powell.

"My dear Damar, I am glad to see you back, and yet I regret your coming, for there are strange stories here about you. But I am your friend, as is also Buffalo Bill."

"Come and see him, for he knows of your coming and is able to see you."

"Able to see me?" gasped Damar.

"Yes, for you know he was severely wounded; but he'll be out in a week or so, I hope, all right once more."

"Frank Powell, is not Buffalo Bill able to be about?"

"Not yet."

"He has not left the fort?"

"By no means, nor his bed either, until two days ago."

"Do you mean this?" and Duke Damar seemed deeply moved.

"Why doubt me, Damar?"

"Pardon me, Powell, but I was told on the train by the conductor that he had seen Buffalo Bill, and the stage-driver I came overland with also told me so."

"At Hank's Ranch I saw Buffalo Bill myself and talked with him."

"Impossible!" cried Frank Powell, while Lieutenant Damar said:

"Then, by Heaven! Buffalo Bill has a double!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIOUS REVOLVER.

THE return of Lieutenant Damar created an excitement among both officers and men.

He had gone away, called by the earnest appeal of his father to come to him, respected by both officers and soldiers.

He had been the most popular man in the fort, and, though a trifle wild, and, some said, at times a reckless card-player, nothing was said against his character or honor.

Not only Buffalo Bill, but Surgeon Powell, had been most anxious to risk their lives to aid him in passing through the Indian lines, that he might go to his dying father.

He returned to find himself bowed to coldly, by his former friends, and was made to feel that he had done some wrong—that some stain of infamy was upon him.

"My God, Powell, what does this mean?" he asked, as the two went together toward the quarters of Buffalo Bill, and, meeting several officers, Damar was given the cut direct.

"Lieutenant, when we reach Cody's quarters, I wish you to tell us just what has happened to you since you left us that night on the prairie," said the army surgeon.

"First, Powell, tell me all that has happened since that fateful night, and I will gladly then make known to you what has occurred to me, and I have much to tell, I assure you."

They had now reached the pleasant cabin home of the scout, and Damar felt that Buffalo Bill was at least his friend, as the scout, lying on his cot, warmly grasped the officer's hand, and said:

"Welcome back, lieutenant, and accept my sympathy in your loss and troubles."

"Thank you, Cody; but I am sorry to see you still confined to your room."

"It's lucky the space is no smaller, lieutenant, as the wound was a bad one, and I believe Powell is the only man who could have saved me. You see, I lost so much blood I swooned away and was no use whatever."

"You saved my life and my scalp, Lieutenant Damar, for I have been told how you cut back through the red-skins, and brought your company to my aid," and Buffalo Bill spoke with much feeling.

"I did but my duty, Cody, my friend."

"Some men do not regard it their duty to take such chances for another, but you were rash to go off alone with Spur, as you did."

"I went off alone, and Spur followed me. Had he not done so I would have been killed; but, poor fellow, he fell soon after."

"Spur dead?" cried Surgeon Powell.

"Yes, he was shot some few miles from the spot I left you, and, as my horse was killed, I took his and rode on."

"Strange that no one at the fort mentioned this."

"I really believe I forgot to speak of it, for I delayed but a moment, as it were, and went on to the station to catch the coach."

"Where was he killed?" asked Powell.

"On the direct trail, some miles from where I left you."

"I have been over that trail a half-dozen

times since, and saw no body. The remains of a horse I did see, yes; but no human bones."

"Great Heaven! could he not have been dead and was thus captured?" cried Lieutenant Damar.

"It must have been, and if so he was tortured to death."

"Poor Spur! But, I certainly deemed him dead, or I would never have left him as I did. I must find out just what his fate has been."

"It is too late now, poor fellow," cried Buffalo Bill.

"I am so glad, Cody, to see you all right again."

"It was a close call, lieutenant; but the troops went into camp, and it was not until some days after that we retreated to the fort, and here I have been ever since," answered the scout.

"Now tell us of yourself, Damar; and, Bill, the lieutenant has something to tell you that will be startling, I assure you," Frank Powell remarked.

"I have more than one thing of a startling nature to tell you both, for you alone of all here seem now to be my friends, and I wish to make known to you much that is strange, mysterious and tragic."

"Poor Spur's unknown fate worries me more than you may know; but, there are other causes of trouble and sorrow to me which I will tell you of."

Then the young officer told of his slipping off alone to make the ride to the fort, the gallant rescue of the brave Spur, his fall, dead as he believed, and how he had pushed on untiringly to the end of his journey.

The burial of his father the day he had come in sight of his home, his witnessing all from the cedars, and then the shot from the thicket as he knelt by the grave.

"There is the wound, which this lock of hair hides, and the arrow-wound in my shoulder is also healed."

"Now, when I recovered consciousness, I found my face stained with blood, and I lay upon the grave. In my hand was clutched this pistol," and he took from his pocket the silver-mounted revolver which had the name of Buffalo Bill engraven on it.

"I went on to the mansion, and, half-dazed, reached the library, where the lawyer was reading my father's will to the heirs."

"I startled them by my presence, for they had received no telegram that I had sent, notifying them of my coming, nor had I had letters which Attorney Hilton said that he had sent me."

"In telling of this attempted assassination, I discovered, to my amazement, your name, Cody, engraven upon the revolver."

"My name?" cried Buffalo Bill, in alarm.

"See for yourself!"

"Why, this is my pistol, for here is my name."

"It certainly is."

"But, there hang my two revolvers."

Surgeon Powell took down the scout's belt of arms, and the two revolvers were looked at and found to be the exact counterpart of the one which Duke Damar had.

"This is remarkable," declared Buffalo Bill, in astonishment.

"It certainly is most mysterious," rejoined Powell.

"It is a mystery that I cannot solve, this pistol being in my hand when I recovered consciousness, any more than I can understand who it was that fired upon me."

"The man certainly must have dogged your trail from the West," Cody remarked.

"So it would seem."

"But, who was he, and where did he get this revolver, exactly like my own weapons, and with my name upon it, exactly as they are?"

"I do not know; but, there is more to tell, and solve the mystery we must, Cody, for your sake as well as for mine," and Damar's face was pale with suppressed excitement, in which Frank Powell fully participated.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BRAND OF CAIN UPON HIM.

THE SCOUT and Surgeon Powell were also deeply interested in what the lieutenant told them, and they awaited anxiously for him to continue his recital of what had occurred to him since leaving the fort.

"I found at my home, besides my aunt, her daughter, Nellie, and my cousin, Delancy Redfield, my father's attorney, Mr. Vance Hilton, and a young artist, a friend of the family."

"The lawyer had read the will of my father upon my arrival, but reread it. It was hardly what I had expected, though I had no reason to complain, for it left me Sea Vale estate and one-third of his fortune. It made my cousins, Nellie Regis and Delancy Redfield, children of my father's two sisters, co-heirs with myself, gave my aunt, Mrs. Regis, a life interest in a large cash fund, and remembered the old family servants handsomely."

"In case of my death Sea Vale was to go, with my share, to my two cousins, and so also, should either, or both of them die, their share was to revert to the survivor."

"I am thus particular about the will, that you may understand what happened afterward."

"Between my cousin Delancy and myself, there had been always a certain feeling, which he was responsible for; but it was known and charged to my jealousy of him."

"That night Delancy was killed—murdered."

"I heard his cry of 'murder!' a pistol-shot followed, and running to his room I found him dead, a bullet-wound in the head. Bending over him I was found by the lawyer and Mr. Regis Rossmore, the friend of the family, of whom I spoke."

"Aid was sent for, a coroner's jury came, and, to my horror, I saw that I was suspected of killing my cousin—the motive being an alleged ill-will each felt toward the other, and to get his share of the fortune, while also I would have him out of the way as a rival for the love of my cousin, Nellie Regis."

"I confess circumstantial evidence was against me, especially, as your pistol, this one, had been found in my possession, and another shot had been fired out of it, and the ball, extracted from the wound, was just the same in size and weight as the others."

"But, at that juncture, my cousin Nellie appeared and her testimony saved me, for she stated that she had seen a man leave the room after the shot, and beheld me, by my shadow on the wall, in my own rooms, spring from the window and go to Delancy's chamber when alarmed by the firing."

"In spite of her testimony I saw that I was still suspected; but I was set free, and after a stay at home that was one of wretchedness for me I started to come West once more."

"On my way I met with a strange adventure, saving the life of a gentleman, at whose house I stopped, and which was entered by burglars."

"I killed one of the robbers, but the other made his escape."

"Upon the train, Cody, the conductor told me that he had seen you!"

"He was mistaken."

"So I now know; but Boyd, the Overland driver, also told me that you had come through on the coach ahead."

"How strange!"

"I was glad to know that you were all right, and at Hank's Ranch I met you—"

"Met me, Lieutenant Damar?"

"I met your double, for I talked with you yourself, as I believed, though I noticed that you was cold and reserved and ill at ease."

"This is most remarkable!"

"It is, and you, that is, your double—for he is the very picture of you, Cody, arranged to start with me at daybreak for the fort."

"He promised to call me in time, but the agent awoke me and said you had gone early in the night."

"I then came on alone, wondering at your singular conduct."

"You mean my double's strange conduct, for I am here, as you see, lieutenant."

"Yes; but that man would be taken for you by your own mother, and yet, I mean no flattery when I say that I did not believe your counterpart lived."

"I cannot understand it, and if I was superstitious this would make me nervous, for not only does some one try to kill you with the counterpart of my revolvers, but you meet a man that looks like me, and so pretends to be."

"It certainly so appears, Cody."

"And others saw this man, my double?"

"Yes, several others."

"Surgeon Powell, will you go to Hank's to-morrow, and see how many saw this man?"

"Certainly, Cody, for I am anxious to solve the mystery," answered the surgeon, promptly and earnestly.

"Nor is this all," continued the lieutenant.

Both looked at him in surprise.

"I had left the ranch but half an hour, when I saw, in my path, a young and really beautiful Indian girl. She was gorgeously dressed, rode a fine black pony, and coolly told me, in good English, that I must leave the trail and follow her, as death lay in wait for me on that trail. So I obeyed her, and she rode rapidly on."

"After following her for miles I found that she had led me, by a circuitous way, back to the main fort trail, and telling me that there was no further danger, she bolted off like an arrow from a bow."

"What is your explanation of this?" Powell asked of Cody, as the young officer paused in his narrative.

"I am as deep in the dark as before," the scout said. "It is evident there is work for us to do, for these mysteries must be solved, and I shall begin to-morrow!"

The surgeon looked at the scout, and Duke Damar saw a significant glance pass between them.

Then the fort surgeon spoke:

"My dear Damar, it pains me to say what I have to, but, the truth is, news came to the colonel commanding that you were suspected of killing your adopted brother because your father had left him an equal share in his fortune."

"The colonel sent a courier to the railroad with a telegram and received reply from the

commanding general at Governor's Island, New York, that the rumor was generally believed, though you had been proven not guilty under what was supposed to be perjured testimony."

"My God!" came from the lips of the young officer, and great beads of sweat stood on his forehead.

"I am most sorry to pain you, Damar; but the colonel held a consultation with his officers, and all but myself urged that you should be forced to resign."

"Forced? By Heaven, I will willingly resign! Those whom I believed my friends, when a cloud hovers over me desert me, and then, by their actions, aid in branding me with the curse of Cain."

"Powell, God bless you, as my friend!"

"And I am your friend, Duke Damar," earnestly said Buffalo Bill.

"Bless you, Bill, for from my heart I feel your kindness."

"As I remained your friend, Damar, I was selected to ask you to resign, for I refused to demand it."

"It was said that you had gambled heavily and lost a fortune, and, in fact, some one in the fort is in correspondence with some one East who is certainly your foe!"

"But I will find this foe, I will have it out and—"

"No, you can do nothing as an officer; so I would urge you to resign and try to clear your name. Having done so, yours is the victory, and the shame falls upon your professed friends!"

"And such is my advice, lieutenant, and most certainly Surgeon Powell and myself will do all in our power to help you to solve these damning mysteries," Buffalo Bill said, impressively.

"I will do as you advise. Surgeon Powell, will you take my resignation to the colonel?"

"At once."

Sitting down at the table the young officer wrote in a bold hand:

"Having a brand upon my brow, put there by the unjust and unkind suspicions of those whom I believed my friends, I hereby tender my resignation as an officer in the United States Army, hoping that it will be immediately accepted and thus set me free to prove my innocence and cast back the dishonor in the teeth of my accusers."

These lines were signed and addressed, and Surgeon Powell carried them to the commanding officer, who promptly accepted the resignation upon his own responsibility, and also gave Duke Damar permission to depart from the fort at his earliest convenience, adding, as a balm to his wounded feelings, in a formal note:

"MY DEAR DAMAR:—"

"I cannot, will not now believe you guilty of the foul charge; but, under the circumstances, deem it best for you to be free to hunt down the guilty one, whose foul crime is laid upon you."

"Success attend you in your good work, and be ever assured of my friendship."

"There are others who would be your friends, Damar; but, somehow, there is a powerful and secret influence working against you in the army," said Surgeon Powell.

"Well, thank Heaven I am free to begin the good work of confounding my accusers, and this night—yes, this very hour, I will leave this fort."

In vain did both the surgeon and the scout urge him to delay a few days.

"No, Buffalo Bill! No, Surgeon Powell! The brand of Cain is upon my brow, and I go at once to solve this accursed mystery," replied the exiled lieutenant.

"Then I go with you as far as Hank's Ranch," replied Powell; and, just before dawn, the two rode off together, and took the trail across the plains—Buffalo Bill deeply regretting his inability to accompany the exiled officer as far as the Overland stage station and help to solve the mysteries that seemed to completely surround him.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

THE scene where Spur had fallen, and his master had had his horse killed under him, was reached by Surgeon Powell and Duke Damar soon after sunrise.

There were the bones of the soldier's horse, picked clean long before by wolves and vultures, and some distance away were the remains of several Indian ponies slain; but nowhere visible were human bones.

"They removed their own dead and wounded," Duke decided.

"They would not have removed Spur, however, had he been killed," the scout rejoined.

"Then you deem it probable that the poor fellow was not killed?"

"I feel sure of it."

"Had he been wounded?"

"Well, if seriously, they would have killed and scalped him and left his body."

"If slightly?"

"They would have carried him with them, hoping that he would get well and give them a chance to torture him to death."

"Poor Spur!"

"At least that is what they would have done with a white man, or an Indian foe."

"And why not with Spur?"

"He was a negro, and I doubt if ever they saw one before."

"True."

"His ebony skin and woolly head may have saved him."

"But I feel sure that he was dead. My horse fell dead under the red-skins' fire, and when I arose to my feet Spur lay upon the ground and his horse stood near him. I bent over and placed my hand upon his heart, but it seemed to be stilled, and so, as the Indians were almost upon me, I sprung upon Spur's horse and dashed away."

"I hope that Spur was not killed, and if so, I shall expect to find him a prisoner in the Sioux' chief village, for, somehow, I do not believe they would kill him, being a negro."

"Heaven grant it!" was the fervent ejaculation of Damar, and the two rode on in silence together.

Coming to the spot, in the afternoon, where the strange Indian girl had left the soldier, Frank Powell, who was second only to Buffalo Bill as a trailer, began to follow the tracks left by the Indian pony.

"We can trail her, that is certain, so let us go first along the track you were following and discover where that ambush was," and they increased their pace.

In a short while the Surgeon Scout drew rein.

"Here is where two horsemen entered the trail, and they went as we are now going," he announced.

Half a mile further on they came to a thicket, and into this the two trails went, and in the thicket was a spot where two horses had been hitched for some time, and behind a fallen tree, which commanded the trail, the soft earth showed indications of two men having been crouching.

All these signs the Surgeon Scout read as he would a page from a book.

"Here is the ambush they had for you, Damar, and, as you did not come, they mounted their horses and rode on to the station to see why you were delayed."

"So it would seem, Powell."

"So it was, and we will now go on and follow the trail of that mysterious Indian girl, for what she was to those two men it is not easy to fathom."

They then rode back to the spot where the Indian girl had parted from Damar, and the Surgeon Scout at once struck her trail and unerringly followed it.

"It leads toward the cabin of an old trapper who dwells in the hills some miles from here."

"We will press on to reach his cabin to-night, and maybe he can tell us something we would like to know," Powell suggested.

The pony trail was followed unerringly by the skilled scout, across streams and prairies, over hills and through timber until the country became almost mountainous.

"Lone Dick, as we call the old trapper, lives about half a mile from here, and the girl's trail, as you see, goes on toward his cabin."

"You are right, Powell; but I never heard of this Lone Dick before. Who and what is he?"

"An old man, who is doubtless hiding from the law, for some crime he has committed, for he never goes to the fort or to the station. He stops the coach on the Overland, and sends for what ammunition and supplies he needs, and also packs up his pelts and puts them on top of the stage, the driver selling them and bringing him back the money or goods."

"Some say that he has a large sum in gold laid by; but certainly it does him no good, for he never leaves his cabin except to trap and hunt or to meet the stage."

"Do the Indians never molest him?" asked Duke.

"I have never heard of their doing so, and though the road-agents have visited him several times, it is said they never found his gold and could not force him to say where he had hidden it."

"If this girl has gone to his cabin he must be friendly with the Sioux."

"It would seem so; but his cabin is up this canyon, and I see the girl's trail goes that way," and the Surgeon Scout led the way into a wild canyon, on one side of which ran a swiftly-flowing stream.

A ride of half a mile and they came in sight of a rude but substantial cabin perched upon a pile of rocks, thickly covered with pines.

One end of the cabin overhung the stream, forty feet below, so that a bucket could be lowered for water without leaving the house, and the only way to get up to it was by a steep path which one man could readily defend against half a hundred.

The top of the rock was not a quarter of an acre in size, and certainly the spot had been well selected for a man who dwelt alone and in the midst of dangers.

Seated on the bank of the stream was the occupant of the cabin, and he threw aside his fishing-rod for his rifle as the two horsemen came in sight; but, recognizing the Surgeon Scout, and seeing that both wore uniforms, he

took up his fishing-pole once more and calmly resumed his work, or sport.

He was a man of large frame, gray hair and beard, both worn long. He was clad in a suit of buckskin, moccasins and a foxskin cap, the tail hanging down his back, and with a bunch of eagle-feathers as an ornament pinned upon one side.

He had a repeating rifle leaning against a tree near him, and wore a belt in which were a long bowie-knife and a pair of revolvers.

He nodded simply as the two officers rode up, while he went on with his fishing.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CANYON SPECTER.

SURGEON POWELL had seen the old trapper several times before, but Duke Damar had never met him and so gazed upon him with considerable interest.

He saw that his face was darkly bronzed, and though his hair and beard indicated age, his eyes were bright and his movements quick and full of strength.

As they halted near him, he drew out a fine large fish and quietly rolled up his line with the remark:

"I've got three of 'em of a size, pards, so they'll be good eatin'. Does yer go on up ther canyon, or will yer 'light and hev some supper, and roost with me?"

"Thank you, Dick, we will accept your invitation, for night is coming on, and I wish to have a talk with you. You know me, I believe?"

"Yes, you is the Magic Medicine-man, as the Injuns calls yer."

"Yes, and this is my friend, Lieutenant Duke Damar, from the fort."

They both saw the old trapper start and bend his eyes searchingly upon Duke, but his motive they could not understand.

"I'm pleased ter meet yer, sir. Let me call my critter and we'll go up to ther cabin, and such as it is, and hes, yer is welcome to."

He placed his hand to his mouth, and gave a long, shrill call. This he repeated several times. Soon there came the clatter of hoofs and a horse appeared in sight coming at a gallop.

"That's my critter," said Lone Dick with evident pride, as the long-bodied, raw-boned animal trotted up to his side.

"If yer wants ter, pards, yer kin jist stake yer critters out here in ther valley ter feed, fer a hour, an' then fetch 'em up inter ther fort, as I calls my rock."

"It won't do ter leave 'em down here o' nights, fer ther wolves is bad I kin tell yer, and 'u'd eat 'em up; but the brutes won't come up thar, as I has a leetle sojer as is a fu'st-class sentinel, you bet."

The horses were then staked out to feed, and the two officers followed the lone trapper up the steep path.

At the upper end they saw the "sojer sentinel" in the shape of a large grizzly bear, chained to the rocks and guarding the path.

"I tuk him when he war a cub, and he are my guard-down angel. Hey! angel! these gents hain't no supper fer you."

The large bear looked disappointed, but obeyed his master and stepped aside to let the visitors pass.

"You see he minds me, though I has no visitors to speak of. I did hev some red-skins call once, but, arter he hed eat two of 'em the rest concluded ter leave. An' then he chawed ther arm off'n a road-agint one day, and it give him a taste fer humans which he hain't forgot."

"And you have other savage pets, I see," said Powell, referring to two large wolves lying before the cabin-door, and growling ominously.

"Them is darlin's, and I riz them from pups, too; but they won't hurt yer, pards, so don't shoot 'em."

The cabin was quite a commodious one, with two rooms, one of which overhung the stream several feet.

From here a rope was visible, leading out of a narrow window across the stream to a tree on the other shore.

"That's my safety-bridge, pards, ef I hed to git out sudden, yer know. I kin pull thet leetle bridge across, as yer sees, and wind it back ag'in with ther windlass. I'm well fixed, yer discovers."

"You seem to be, Dick, and it would be a bold man who would attack you here."

"They has tried it, doctor, and they went off sorry," was the significant remark.

The trapper now built a fire on the rocks, prepared his fish, brought some juicy bear-steaks from the cabin, boiled a pot of coffee and made some hoe-cakes for supper.

"Now, pards, supper are ready, so jist set-to."

This the visitors did with a relish, and when they finished darkness was coming on, so the trapper went down to fetch up the horses.

He brought them by the huge grizzly without trouble, and stalled them among the rocks, where a log roof sheltered them securely, should a foe be firing upon the trapper's fort.

"Now, pards, let us know why you is in these parts," said Lone Dick, as he joined his guests, lighted his pipe, and throwing more wood upon the fire, sat down to a quiet enjoyment of the evening.

"Dick, we are on our way to Hank's Ranch," the surgeon explained.

"You is too good a scout, Doc, to git lost, for this hain't ther trail."

"I know that, and I am not lost; but on our way I saw a trail that I took a notion to follow."

"Whose was it?"

"The trail of an Indian pony from the tracks; but we followed it this far."

"And then?"

"It goes on up the canyon, past here."

"Thar's but one horse passed up this canyon fer weeks, savin' my own critter and youn."

"And that horse?"

"Yer doesn't want ter trail thet animile?"

"Why?"

"Wa-al, it are bad luck."

"What do you mean?"

"Jist what I says: it is bad luck."

"Who or what is bad luck?"

"Ther boss an' rider!"

"And who is the rider?"

"A sperit."

"What?"

"Has yer never heerd tell o' a sperit in these parts?"

"I have heard a rumor that there was a specter seen in these mountains at times."

"Did yer hear who it were?"

"A woman, I believe."

"Right you is."

"Nonsense."

"It are so, all the same, Doc."

"You mean to tell us that we were following a specter horse and rider?"

"Ther horse hain't a specter, fer he leaves a trail; but it are a spook gal that rides him."

The surgeon glanced at Damar. Both men well knew how superstitious the plainsmen, and many of the soldiers, are; but both smiled at the old trapper's earnestness.

"You say it is a woman?"

"Yas, a gal spook."

"How do you know?"

"Has seen her many a time."

"When did you see her last?"

"Yesterday."

"Ah! and did you talk with her?"

"I hain't a durned fool, Pard Doc."

"Well, tell us about her?"

"I know only what I has heerd and seen."

"Tell us all you know and have seen."

"Waal, there were a man as come West ter these parts, some year ago, and he brought with him a pretty gal, as he said were his wife."

"One night he got mad at her and kilt her, and then buried her near his cabin and then lighted out fer other parts."

"It were said that he were a army officer, or sojer; but I don't know about that; but ther man hain't been seen since, and ther sperit o' ther murdered gal rides about this country by day and night, and anybody as follows her trail has bad luck."

"How do you know this, for you never go into the camps, or to the forts, Lone Dick?"

The trapper cast a quick glance at the Surgeon Scout, but replied:

"I has visitors like you is, sometimes, and they talks."

"And you saw this woman last evening?"

"I seen her sperit."

"How did she look?"

"She were dressed all in white, had her hair down her back, and were ridin' a black pony."

"Ah!" and the surgeon glanced at Duke, while the trapper added:

"It were her trail as you was a-follerin', and it are bad luck."

"See ef yer doesn't git bad luck, pards."

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE AND MORE OF IT.

THE night passed without any incident to the two guests of Lone Dick, the trapper. He gave them his own room and slept in the one overhanging the river, where he kept his pelts and stores, and a hammock swung there he used as his bed.

When they awoke, so comfortable were their quarters, the sun was well up and the odor of broiling steaks and boiling coffee greeted their olfactories.

They found that the trapper had led their horses down into the valley to feed, two hours before, and had a tempting breakfast for them.

"There's the stream for a morning bath, gents, and a rope ladder will let yer down to it," he suggested, as they arose.

They were glad to get the chance of a bath so tempting, and, soon after, refreshed and rested by their night's sleep, sat down to breakfast.

Lone Dick had some fresh fish for them, a broiled bird or two, steaks, hoe-cakes and coffee, so that they were literally "in clover."

"And do you still think, Trapper Dick, by the light of day, that the one who passed up the canyon last night, is a specter?" asked Duke.

"I knows it, pard. She are a sperit and no mistake, and I only hopes yer won't hev bad luck fer follerin' her trail," answered the trapper, impressively.

"I only wish I could get a close view of her."

"Waal, yer c'u'd if yer were much in these

parts; but, as for me, I am happier when she hain't around. I gits a chill when I sees her, and even my old grizzly are oneasy, an' ther wolves, Rip and Tear, droops ther tails in dread when ther Specter o' ther Canyon goes along.

"She hain't my style, pards, and I are sorry when I sees her."

"Does she ever speak to you?"

"Does sperits talk?"

"Have you ever addressed her?"

"I us't ter tip my cap to her; but she looked as though she didn't hanker arter my acquaintance, so I give it up, you bet!"

"And she just passes you by in silence?"

"She do, and I ar' glad she don't git familiar."

Seeing that the old trapper was convinced that the Lady of the Canyon was a real spirit, the two officers said no more, but thanking him for his hospitality they took their departure, still following the trail of the Indian pony, seemingly greatly to Lone Dick's regret.

Out of the canyon led the tracks, up into the mountains, and at last reached the regular Overland Trail, along which the stage-coach ran.

Hardly had they come into this trail, when they heard the crack of a whip, a loud command, the rumble of wheels, and pistol-shots.

Then the rumble of wheels was no longer heard, and Surgeon Powell cried:

"The road-agents have held up the coach! Come!"

Into the flanks of their horses went their spurs, and the two animals bounded forward like the wind.

A ride of a couple of hundred yards brought them to a turn in the trail, and, dashing around it, they came upon a strange and thrilling scene.

The Overland coach was halted in the trail, and the driver sat upon his box, holding his reins, but helpless, for a man stood at the fore-wheel, his rifle leveled at him.

Before the heads of the lead horses stood another man, holding the bits, while on either side of the coach were several men.

The door on each side was open, and a man stood on the steps, evidently robbing the passengers.

The nature of the ground just there drowned the hoof-falls of the coming horses, and Surgeon Powell and Lieutenant Damar, revolvers in hand, were upon the road-agents in an instant.

Down went the man at the heads of the horses, under a shot from the Surgeon Scout, while the one whose rifle covered the driver bit the dust equally as quickly by a bullet from Duke Damar's revolver.

On each side of the coach-horses rode the two rescuers, while, with wild cries, the road-agents darted into the thick undergrowth that bordered the trail.

They fired at random and Duke Damar's horse went down, but one of their number, ere he could disappear was shot dead.

The road-agents, seeing army officers rushing upon them naturally supposed that their men were following, and mounting their horses rode off at full speed.

Duke Damar was unhurt by the fall, and appeared at one door of the stage-coach as Surgeon Powell did at the other.

"Pards, yer has did me a favor I kin never fergit," cried the driver as he dismounted from his box.

"You certainly have rendered me great aid, gentlemen, for I have thousands of dollars with me, which those scamps were robbing me of, besides wounding me slightly as you see," and the speaker held up his arm showing that his coat-sleeve was saturated with blood.

He was a man along in years, a gentleman without doubt, but bronzed by exposure and dressed in miner garb.

"Why, Lieutenant Damar, is it to you that we owe our escape? Most delighted I am to see you; but I believed you were at Sea Vale!" and the speaker sprung out of the coach.

"What! Regis Rossmore, is it really you? I supposed you to be in New York?" and the hands of the two men met in a friendly grasp, for Duke Damar had not forgotten that in the young artist he had found one who had believed in his innocence and even treated him with consideration.

"No, I lost some sketches of a fine bit of Western scenery, which I had an order to put into a large painting, so I ran out to make them over again, and am now on my way East."

"But you have saved me considerable cash, too, by this gallant rescue of us by yourself and friend."

Duke Damar now presented the Surgeon Scout, and the other passenger, the old miner, introduced himself as Roger Malcolm.

"Permit me to look at your wound, sir, for the quantity of blood on your sleeve causes me to fear it is serious," said the surgeon.

The miner was already showing signs of weakness, so his sleeve was quickly opened, and with his surgical-case, taken from his saddle, Dr. Powell went to work.

"An artery was cut, sir, and I am glad indeed to be here to help you," said the surgeon, as he

extracted the bullet from the arm and bound up the severed blood duct.

Though the surgeon did not say so, the miner knew that but for his timely coming he would not only have lost his money but his life.

When the wound was dressed and the miner made comfortable, the bodies of the slain road-agents were put on top of the coach, the saddle and bridle of Duke Damar's horse taken from the dead beast and put in the boot, and the stage rolled on, Damar in the stage and Powell riding on ahead.

"Will you return at once to the East, Rossmore?" asked Duke as the coach rolled along toward Hank's Ranch, which was also an Overland station.

"No, for I will be detained West for awhile."

"I am sorry, for I have resigned from the army, and am on my way home."

"Resigned! you surprise me!"

"I did what I deemed best, for I find there is the same belief here as to my guilt in the taking off of my Cousin Delancy, that haunted me East," said Damar, bitterly.

"My poor friend, it is indeed sad to have such a curse upon you; but I hope you will be able to sift the matter to your honor."

"I only wish that I was going East now; but I have to return to where I left my traps, and was only going as far as Hank's to get a look at the scenery by day, for I passed over it in the night going out, and there are some bits of landscape which I am told are fine along the route."

"There are, indeed; but, you must visit me at Sea Vale when you return."

"I will surely do so, thank you; but I am glad our friend here will have your company, for I think his wound has shaken him up considerably," and Rossmore turned to the miner.

"Do you go far East, sir, for I shall be glad to serve you all in my power?" Damar said.

"Yes, I go to Connecticut, where I have not been since I left it in '49, when I was seized with the gold fever. I will be glad of your company, lieutenant," returned the miner.

After a two-hours' drive the coach rolled up to the log-cabin, known as Hank's, and the story of the road-agents' attack was told to the eager listeners who hovered about that place.

"For the life of me, Mr. Rossmore, I cannot place you," said the Surgeon Scout, as the party came out from dinner together.

"You mean that we have met before, Powell," said the artist, with a smile.

"It seems so to me, sir."

"And yet I do not recall having seen you before to-day."

"Then I must be mistaken, though your face seems strangely familiar," and the surgeon walked off to speak to Landlord Hank, who had called to him.

"Pard Powell, I heerd yer tell Ribbon Moses thet yer had left Buffalo Bill at ther for?"

"Yes, Hank, laid up with a wound; but, he'll soon be out."

"He are out now."

"What do you mean?"

"Buffalo Bill were here yesterday."

"No, Hank."

"I tells you yes, Pard Doc."

The surgeon turned and called to Damar, who was talking with the artist.

"Damar, our friend Hank seems to think he saw Buffalo Bill here yesterday?"

"I did see him, and you seen him, lieutenant, three nights ago here, didn't you?"

"I thought I did, Hank; but I was mistaken, as you see."

"No sir! they don't put up two men like Buffalo Bill nowadays."

"Still the scout is at the fort just recovering from a long wound-illness."

Hank shook his head.

"I tells yer I has seen him here several times o' late, and he rode away from here yesterday, arter gettin' dinner at my ranch, and I called him Bill and had considerable talk with him, askin' why he skipped off from you, lieutenant, t'other night."

"What did he say?"

"He laughed an' said he had reasons fer it."

The surgeon looked at Duke, and the two seemed to be at a loss to account for what they heard.

Who was this mysterious double of Buffalo Bill?

The question they could not answer, and as Ribbon Moses called "all aboard fer ther East," Duke could tarry no longer; so he bade Powell good-by, telling him that he would write to him, and asking him to also let him hear if he discovered anything about this mysterious Buffalo Bill and the Specter of the Canyon.

"I am not one to let up, Damar, until I see the end of a trail, and I'll not do so in this case, so expect to hear from me, for Buffalo Bill will soon be able to take the trail also with me."

"And let me know if you hear aught of poor Spur?"

"I will, assuredly."

"God bless you for your true friendship, Powell, and good-by," and wringing the hand of the Surgeon Scout, Damar turned to the artist.

"Rossmore, I shall hope to see you at Sea Vale within the month."

"Anything you wish to know about this country Surgeon Powell can tell you," and with a grasp of the hand the ex-lieutenant entered the coach, where the miner was already seated, and Ribbon Moses sent the horses along the trail at a lively pace.

"Now to remain right here and meet this double of Buffalo Bill," said Surgeon Powell, as he stood gazing after the departing coach.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SOLDIER AND THE MINER.

RIBBON MOSES was a careful driver, and he had a good beast as well, so that he did not jolt the wounded miner any more than was necessary.

He also told the driver who relieved him at the next station to go slow over bad places and not shake up the wounded passenger.

The result of this advice got for Ribbon Moses a pretty little sum in gold-pieces, for the miner appreciated his kindness, and proved his appreciation accordingly.

Riding with the miner, and being the only passenger, Duke Damar found that he was no ordinary personage.

He told the young soldier that he had had a collegiate education, and meant to have become a lawyer, but that he had been so unfortunate as to be the rival in love of his brother, whom he devotedly loved, and so had yielded the field to him.

"I thought that I held the advantage, and could have won the lady; but then, Andrew was a fellow whom a set-back in a love affair would well-nigh kill, so I just lighted out from home one night, and told my father I was going to look up my fortune."

"From that day they have never heard from me but once, and I'll tell you how that was."

"I saved the life of a ranchero's daughter down in New Mexico, and made her my wife."

"She died when our little boy was an infant, and, learning that my brother had married an old sweetheart, I sent the baby to them, asking them to bring it up as their own child."

"I did not tell them that the boy would have a fortune some day, left him by his mother; but I sent along a certificate of marriage, to show that all things were regular, told them I was not starving, and some day might see them again."

"Then it was I struck off for California and got into the gold mines."

"I got anxious to hear from home, so I sent a fellow East to look up how matters stood, but keep dark himself."

"He came back and told me that my father and mother were dead, my brother was living at the old home, and had two children besides my boy, but that the latter was treated as their own in all particulars."

"Since then I have heard but once of them, and they have never heard from me, so believe that I am dead."

"Now, I am going East, for my old sweetheart, my brother's wife, is laid in the grave, and my love is buried with her, so there is no need of any jealousy now."

"I'm going back, as you see, a poor miner, but I think I'll be welcome without a dollar."

"Then, too, I wish my boy to get hold of his mother's fortune, which amounts to considerable now, though I have no share in it."

"But for you, pard, and your friend, the surgeon, I would not now be here, for you two saved my life, and took big chances to do it, which shows that you are a man to tie to."

"I heard, when you and your artist friend were talking, enough to know that you had had your troubles, too; but I hope you'll get out of them all right, though they must have been heavy ones to bear to cause a man like you to resign from the army; but you have my sympathy, and here's my hand on it."

Duke Damar was touched by the simple story of the miner, and he saw in the man's face one whom he could trust.

So he said:

"I thank you for your sympathy, sir, and also for your confidence in telling me the story of your life."

"I hope that joy will attend your later years."

"As you have been so good as to tell me of yourself, I will now make known to you why I left the army, and I assure you it was a bitter blow for me to do so."

Then did Duke Damar make known to the miner the story of bitterness he carried in his breast.

He said nothing in his own favor, but told how all had come about, from the receiving of his father's urgent appeal to come to him to his meeting him in the coach on the Overland trail the day before.

"Why, Pard Damar, your story is full of wrong and mystery, and of deepest interest as well."

"How strange that this revolver found in your hand at your father's grave should bear the name of Buffalo Bill, and that this scout should have a double of himself as well as his pistols."

"I confess that this is too deep for me; but I think it is your duty to leave the solving of this

mystery to your gallant friend the surgeon, and to Buffalo Bill, who, from what I have heard of him, is a man to follow a trail to its end, while you go East and hunt down this murderer of your cousin, for, you see, I am taking the idea that you are not the assassin."

"I shall do this very thing, though I was tempted to remain at the ranch and endeavor to solve the mystery of Buffalo Bill's Double."

"No; Powell and Cody will do that, mark you."

"And this mysterious Indian girl who warned me of danger?"

"Proves that you have secret foes working against you; but you found her to be what the old trapper called 'a spirit.'"

"Yes; it was the trail of the Indian girl's horse that we followed, and the trapper said that the rider was a woman in white, known as the Specter of the Canyon."

"She had changed her masquerading costume, that is all."

"But leave her to the surgeon and the scout, and you go on the trail of the murderer of your cousin."

"That I will do; but I must act with caution."

"Naturally, and I think you can do so, while you also have the nerve to meet any situation that may arise."

"Thank you," said Duke Damar, with a smile.

"I mean it, for you are no ordinary man, Mr. Damar, and you can count on my aid in any way that I can serve you, for I will be at my brother's home, some forty miles from where you say you are located, for he has the family estate of the Malcolms known as The Retreat."

"The Retreat! the Malcolms!" said Duke Damar, with surprise.

"Yes; you have heard of them?"

"I was at The Retreat not a month ago."

"Indeed! and you saw my brother?"

"I did, sir, if Mr. Andrew Malcolm is your brother."

"He is, indeed."

"Strange that I did not connect you with him before, as you certainly resemble him very closely."

"You saw my son?" eagerly asked the old miner.

Duke Damar did not immediately answer, for he remembered that there were two sons in the Malcolm family.

One was an honored officer of the Revenue Service, and the other was the midnight marauder who had killed his father's nurse and attempted to murder Mr. Malcolm.

Could it be that the Californian was returning to find that his son, sent from New Mexico as an infant, and reared by his uncle as his own child, had proven a serpent to sting him in the end?

"I heard that Lieutenant Andrew Malcolm was on his vessel in the Sound, for he is a Revenue officer," said Damar, cautiously.

"Andrew! that is my dear boy, God bless him!"

Duke Damar gave a sigh of relief.

That midnight murderer was not then the son of the Californian, bad as it was to have him the brother of May Malcolm.

"Tell me all about your visit to The Retreat," urged the miner, and in response Duke Damar told of his going there to escape the storm, of the visit of the marauders, and modestly made known the conspicuous part he had played in the affair.

The Californian listened with rapt attention to all, and then said:

"Heaven bless you, my young friend, for I see that I owe you another debt of gratitude, one I can never repay."

"You will go first with me to The Retreat, will you not?"

"I will, if you wish it," was the reply; but the secret he held with May Malcolm Duke Damar did not make known.

CHAPTER XVIII IN PERIL.

AFTER the departure of Duke Damar from The Retreat, May Malcolm did all she could to drive from the mind of her father the remembrance of the awful night through which he had passed.

Mr. Malcolm realized fully that he would have lost his life but for the being there of Duke Damar to save him.

The dead nurse and the robber were buried in the village churchyard, but all efforts to find his accomplice and the real murderer were unavailing.

The officers of the law had been put upon his track, but no clew could be found as to where he had gone, after he had reached a neighboring town and sold his horses.

The dead robber no one had recognized, and so he found a resting-place in an out-of-the-way corner of the burying ground.

The key of Mr. Malcolm's private desk had been taken from around his neck, where he always carried it, and had the robbers not been foiled by Duke Damar, they would have secured a number of important papers as well as a large

sum in money, with valuable jewels left to May by her mother.

Realizing this, Mr. Malcolm often spoke of Duke Damar to his daughter.

Little dreamed he of the secret that May held locked in her bosom from him, as to who one of the robbers was.

It was a fearful secret for a young girl to bear, but she did so in silence and appeared brave under the cross upon her.

Andrew Malcolm, hearing of the affair, ran home for a short visit, and Mr. Malcolm seemed greatly cheered by his coming, as did also May, but even to him she did not betray the knowledge she had as to who the murderer of the nurse was.

Lieutenant Malcolm was a handsome fellow, tall, well-formed, a perfect athlete, and with a dark, intelligent face.

It was often referred to how unlike May he was, by those who did not know that he was her cousin, and only an adopted brother; but he had been reared so thoroughly as a son of Mr. Malcolm's that few believed him not to be such, and May regarded him wholly as a brother.

From the coming of Andrew, Mr. Malcolm seemed to improve, and he was soon able to walk about on the piazza.

One day May, as was her wont, was reading the papers to her father, when suddenly she started, her face flushed and then paled.

She held the paper up so as to shield her face from her father, and soon after said that she would go for a ride.

She carried the paper with her from the library, however, and once in her own room, threw herself into a chair and opened it.

What she read was as follows:

"A STAINED ESCUTCHEON!

"A BRAVE OFFICER UNDER SUSPICION!

"FORCED TO RESIGN FROM THE ARMY!"

"From a telegram received at Washington we learn that Lieutenant Duke Damar has resigned from the army and has left Fort Forward where he was stationed, and has served the post two years with great distinction."

"It will be remembered that some months ago Lieutenant Damar returned to his home on Long Island Sound to see his dying father, but arrived only in time for the funeral."

"His father was a man of vast wealth, and young Damar naturally expected to be the sole heir; but when the will was read he found that an adopted son and daughter of his father, the children of Mr. Damar's two sisters, had equally shared with him the riches."

"The will so read that in case of the death of either, or both of the other heirs, the one remaining was to receive all."

"Lieutenant Damar, it is said, was not on good terms with his cousin Delancy, but loved his cousin Nellie; but she, so rumor goes, loved the rival, and when that night Delancy was found dead in his room, Duke Damar bending over him, and a pistol belonging to the latter on the floor, it was supposed that the disappointed heir was his murderer."

"The young lady cousin however proved an *alibi* for the accused, though many believed that she perjured herself to do so, and Duke Damar returned to his command under a suspicion which caused his brother officers to give him the cut direct and thereby force him to resign."

"Circumstantial evidence is against the ex-lieutenant; but his career has been one of honor, his bravery has won him fame, and we hope that he will be able to remove this stain upon his name by proving his innocence beyond all question."

Such was the article which May Malcolm read in the paper.

She cut it out and put it carefully away after reading it a second time, and then vehemently from her lips came the words:

"He is falsely accused."

"I would stake my own honor on his innocence!"

Then she ordered her horse and went for a gallop alone.

Her face was flushed with excitement, and she was riding slowly along, her thoughts upon what she had read against Duke Damar, when she came upon a peddler bearing a heavy pack, coming along the road.

"Poor fellow! he earns his living," she said, and drawing rein she intended to buy some articles to help him along, when she started as he let fall his pack, straightened up and looked squarely into her face.

"Roger!"

Her face turned deadly pale with the utterance of the name.

"Yes, May, I am your brother Roger," was the cool response.

The man's hair was long and unkempt, his beard of over a month's growth, and he looked little like a man born in refinement.

"Roger, how dare you come back here after your fearful crime?" she said, indignantly.

"What crime?" was the cool response of the man, and he gazed unblushingly up into her face.

"You are a murderer!"

He started, and said quickly:

"It is false!"

"It is true!"

"My companion killed Victor, not I."

"You know that it is not true, for poor Victor was killed with a knife, and your comrade's

had not been taken from its sheath, and was unstained, while your hands were red with blood."

"Oh, Roger! why have you come here again, when I allowed you to go?"

"The officer did, not you."

"He did so because I asked it."

"Why are you here?"

"I want money."

"You know father has vowed never to give you another dollar."

"Yes, and I know that the old fool will keep his vow."

"Then why come?"

"I do not wish to starve."

"Take my purse, then, for it has some thirty dollars in it."

"Bah! I want money."

"It contains money."

"Don't be silly, little sister, for I want thousands."

"You can never get it."

"Oh, yes, I can, and but for that accursed meddling soldier I'd have had a cool ten thousand that night, with jewels to bring far more."

"Thank God he was there; but are you here again to commit murder and robbery?"

"No, I came to see you."

"Me?"

"Yes, for I want your aid."

"I will do nothing for you."

"You must."

"I will not."

"May Malcolm, I want ten thousand dollars and you must get it for me."

"I will not."

"You shall, for you can take it from father's desk and let him think he was robbed of it by night."

"For shame! to propose such a deed of crime to me."

"You shall do it."

"I say no."

"Well, then, I shall, I vow it, dog about until I get it myself, and the life of my father shall be the forfeit if I am discovered."

"Roger Malcolm, I allowed you to go once, but you do not know me if you think you can frighten me, or defy me."

"I have here thirty dollars in my purse, and I will give you my diamond ring, the one you gave me years ago, and it is worth over a hundred."

"Take the money and the ring and go, and never again come near our home."

"I will not."

"Then I swear to you I will ride on to the village and put an officer on your track to watch you out of this neighborhood."

The man laughed.

"You do not believe me?"

"No."

"Then I will prove it, for if you hang I will have you arrested."

He saw that she meant what she said and grasped her bridle-rein, while a look of fury came into his face.

CHAPTER XIX.

A RECOGNITION.

"UNLESS you vow to me to obey my will by all you deem sacred on earth and in Heaven, May Malcolm, I will take your life," came in savage tones from the lips of Roger Malcolm, the outcast, as he held the bridle-rein in a vise-like grip and gazed up into his sister's face.

The spot was a lonely one, and there was little travel along the highway May well knew.

Her brother was desperate, and his right hand clutched a pistol.

But May Malcolm did not flinch.

"I will take no such vow, and will only aid you to the extent I said, the money and the ring," she said, boldly.

A curse broke from his lips, and he cocked the revolver; but if he meant to carry out his fearful threat, the sound of wheels checked his intent.

"Curses! some one comes," he said.

"Yes, so take the ring and my purse and go your way; but remember I will put some one on your track to see that you do not tarry here."

"Wait until that carriage goes by, and beware not to betray me."

"I will not wait, but claim protection."

"Do you accept my offer?"

He glanced back and saw a vehicle rapidly approaching.

"Yes, give me the money and the ring."

She slipped off her glove, handed him the diamond ring, and then her purse.

"Now go."

"I thank te laties vera much for helps a poor mans," said the cunning rascal, as the vehicle suddenly came to a halt.

May gave a sigh of relief, and now that her danger was over, seemed to feel as though she would fall from her horse, when her ears were greeted with:

"Miss Malcolm!"

"I hope that fellow has done nothing to alarm you?"

"Lieutenant Damar!" she cried, as she now recognized the young soldier as one of the three occupants of the vehicle.

"Mister Damar, Miss Malcolm, for I have resigned from the army; but we were on our way to your home."

"Indeed, I am glad to see you again, Mr. Damar, and father will be delighted, for he often speaks of you."

Duke Damar bowed, and said:

"Permit me to present to you my friend, Mr. Andrews, who is also an old acquaintance of your father."

May bowed and also held out her hand, as she had to Duke Damar, while she said:

"You will also find a welcome at The Retreat, Mr. Andrews."

"I will turn back and ride on with you."

"One moment please, for I wish to speak to that peddler," and Duke Damar sprang from the carriage and walked rapidly after Roger Malcolm, who had moved off when he saw who it was in the carriage, fearing that, in spite of his disguise, he might be recognized.

"Here, my man, will you carry a note back to town for me?" called out Damar, as he hastened on, while May gazed after them with some alarm.

"Vell, my fri'nt, I vas in heaps of a hurry, put I vas oplige you," answered the reprobate, cleverly assuming a Jewish accent, and bending further over under the weight of his pack to conceal his face.

"Now, sir, why are you again in this neighborhood?" sternly said Damar, as he stopped before him.

"I vas sell goots, mine fri'nt."

"You lie, for you are no Jew, nor are you a peddler."

"I knew you the moment I saw you, and I saw that Miss Malcolm was in terror when we drove up, and that caused me to eye you closely."

"You are here for no good, and you are brow-beating Miss Malcolm, knowing that she will not betray you."

"But I let you go once, yet will not again do so if I ever find you again coming near here."

"Go, and remember I shall have a detective on your track within two hours, and he will not leave dogging you until you are a thousand miles from here."

"I can hang you, and I will if ever you give me another chance."

"Go!"

The scamp did not await to be again told.

His face was livid with fear, and he went off at a rapid pace, while Duke Damar calmly returned to the carriage.

May Malcolm had suspected that Duke Damar had recognized her brother, and she was very nervous as she saw him go after him and was hardly able to reply to the questions of the old miner.

She gave a sigh of relief as she saw her brother rapidly depart and the soldier return.

"Miss Malcolm, I am most happy in having met you, for I have a secret to tell you, and you can go on ahead and make it known to your father, whom we do not care to give a shock to, as he is an invalid."

May's heart gave a bound of great fear.

Was there some evil to befall them?

No; for there was a smile upon the face of Duke Damar.

"The truth is, Miss Malcolm, my friend here is more than an old acquaintance of your father."

"Have you often heard of your father's only brother Roger?"

"Many, many times, sir, and we have long believed him dead."

"But can it be—"

"It can be, my child, for I am your uncle, Roger Malcolm."

And the miner's voice quivered with emotion.

Urging her horse up to the side of the carriage May gave her uncle an affectionate greeting, while he said:

"You see, I come back to my old home, May, with worn clothes and but very little money in my pocket."

"What care we for that, for are we not rich, Uncle Roger, and will not our home be yours?"

"Oh, how glad father will be to see you."

"And my son?"

"Andrew? why, he is away on board his vessel, where he is a lieutenant; but he will quickly come to see you and it will seem strange to think that he has another father."

"Ah, my dear May, it will be a pleasure to see your father once more and my boy, whom I last saw when he was but a year old."

"I have been a wanderer for a quarter of a century, but there is a haven of refuge at last before me."

"I will ride on and break the news to father, and you drive slowly so as not to get there too soon."

"Au revoir," and with a kiss thrown from her finger-tips May dashed away, forgetting in the joy of her uncle's return, the sorrow of her meeting with her wicked brother.

When the carriage drove into the grand gateway of The Retreat, Roger Malcolm saw his brother and May upon the piazza, and Andrew Malcolm seemed to appear ten years younger from joy.

Eagerly he grasped his brother's hands in both of his own, and said:

"Roger, believe me I know now just why you left home."

"You sacrificed yourself to me, and in return I have tried to be a father to your son."

"And a noble one you have been, Andrew."

"Well, I am glad indeed to welcome you, to tell you that this is your home, for half of all I have is yours, and glad am I to share with you, as May says you come back a poor man."

Then Andrew Malcolm gave a warm welcome to Duke Damar, and his brother told of their meeting, of his rescue by the young soldier and Surgeon Powell, and that but for the latter he would have bled to death from a wound that was slight, had the bullet not cut an artery.

Duke Damar modestly received the praise bestowed upon him by all, and then, with a merry twinkle in his eye, Roger Malcolm said:

"Now I wish to tell you something of myself."

"It was my good fortune to save the life of a ranchero's daughter of New Mexico, and I made her my wife."

"She died two years after, and our son, Andrew, became heir to a large estate, which I am now ready to turn over to him, according to the will of his mother."

"I being a rover, sent him to you, Andrew, and went to the mines in California, and though I appear as a miner, illy dressed before you, it is because I like the clothing, for I have a large fortune laid by, and, but for our friend Damar here, I would have been robbed of twenty thousand dollars."

"But you said that you had no money, Uncle Roger, and I hoped it was so that we might care for you," said May.

"I said that I had little money in my pocket, and that was true, for I turned my bank-notes into drafts at Mr. Damar's request; but I happen to be worth close on to half a million dollars, Miss Malcolm, which I now give notice I shall leave you a large share of."

"As I have had such a welcome, when believed to be a poor man, I certainly shall not be unwelcome as a rich one."

"But I wish to take a walk about the old place," and seeing that he wished to go alone no one went with him.

From his window, half an hour after, Andrew Malcolm saw his brother going along the path that led to the family burying-ground, and he said:

"Poor Roger, he left his home that I might marry May's mother, and he seeks her grave now upon his return."

"His was a faithful love, indeed; but, thank Heaven, there is nothing to divide us now."

CHAPTER XX.

AT SEA.

SOON after the departure of Duke Damar to rejoin his command at Fort Forward, Mrs. Regis was taken ill, and as it threatened to be serious, her daughter Nellie was sent for.

She came promptly, as did also Lawyer Hilton, and they found that the crisis had passed and Mrs. Regis was much better.

But she begged Nellie to remain for a week or two with her, and seeing that her mother was quite nervous, she willingly did so.

One afternoon a party of young folks from the neighborhood came and begged Nellie to accompany them for a sail on the Sound, and as she seemed pale and worried, Mrs. Regis urged her to go, hoping that it would brighten her up.

Through the carelessness of the young man who was acting as skipper of the little yacht, in looking more at Nellie's sweet face, than at the duties devolving upon him, a mass of storm-clouds were not noticed rising out of the West until a peal of thunder startled them all.

Then the yacht was hastily put back for Sea Vale Haven, which was miles away.

All on board were at once alarmed, for the yacht was a small one, and though a fine craft in fine weather, was not staunch enough to face a heavy blow unless handled with the greatest skill, and the amateur sailors on board were not the best seamen, the skipper in fact seeming to already lose his head at the prospect of being caught in a blow.

Night was coming on, too, and with it the storm was rapidly rising.

There were several vessels in sight, all of which were reefed down prepared to meet the blow.

Afar off was a small steamer, as trim in hull and rig as a pirate craft, and with a battery of half a dozen guns.

Upon her quarter-deck were several officers, and her crew were in a uniform, which proved her to be a vessel-of-war.

The flag at her peak showed that she was a revenue cutter, and she was bowling rapidly along, seeming to defy the threatened tempest.

"That craft is in great danger, for her skipper does not seem to know that a storm is coming down upon him, Worden," said a young officer, with a dark, handsome face, elegant form and wearing the rank of a senior lieutenant.

"Some pleasure party, doubtless, Lieutenant Malcolm, with amateur sailors who do not know their danger," answered Lieutenant Worden, the officer addressed.

Lieutenant Malcolm called for his glass, and turning it upon the craft in question, said:

"It is a yacht with a pleasure party, and there are ladies on board."

"Worden, order more steam on and push the Vidette hard, for disaster will surely come to yonder craft, and we must be near to aid them."

"Quartermaster, head her up a couple of points, and hold her at that."

The revenue cutter Vidette now began to go swiftly along, while all sail was taken in and she depended upon steam alone.

The yacht in the mean time had not even taken in her topsail and was holding on as though hoping to reach port before the storm struck her.

The hope, however, was a vain one, for the tempest swept rapidly along, the skies became black with clouds, the wind increased in violence and the sea ran higher and higher.

"At last! but not before he nearly went over," cried Andrew Malcolm, as he beheld the yacht's topsail taken in.

Soon after the mainsail was lowered and reefed, but it could be seen when once more on her course that she yet carried too much sail.

Then the storm burst in fury upon her, and, after struggling along for awhile, she was seen to career wildly and then go over.

"Worden, take charge, for I must save whom I can," cried Andrew Malcolm, dashing his glass aside, throwing off his coat and cap and running forward.

The bell rung to check the cutter's headway, the life-boat was lowered with a gallant crew, but already had the daring young lieutenant sprung overboard and several of the men followed his example.

And Andrew Malcolm was in the nick of time to catch in his arms a slender form that was sinking from sight beneath the foam-lashed waters.

"Do not fear, for you are safe," he said, as the beautiful eyes of Nellie Regis were turned beseechingly upon him.

"You will save me?" came the pleading words.

"Yes, trust to me; and see! your companions will also be saved, so cheer up," he said, as a mighty wave that tossed them on its crest showed him that the life-boat was nearing the upturned yacht, to which several clung, while two of his men had rescued others that had been washed away.

A hard struggle it was in those wild waters to keep afloat, and, realizing it, Malcolm hailed the vessel:

"Ahoy, the Vidette!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Worden, launch another boat and pick us up."

"Ay, ay, sir! a second boat already launched," and as Lieutenant Worden spoke a boat shot into sight from the lee of the cutter, and after picking up the seamen who held those they had rescued in their arms, it came toward Andrew Malcolm and his precious charge.

"See! we are safe," he said, cheerfully.

But there was no reply; the head of Nellie Regis lay upon his shoulder, the beautiful eyes were closed, the arms hung lifeless about him.

"My God! she is dead!" broke from the lips of Andrew Malcolm.

And as he uttered the words a huge wave tore her from his arms.

CHAPTER XXI.

A GULF BETWEEN THEM.

WITH a strength born of desperation when he felt the form of Nellie Regis torn from his grasp by the fierce waters Lieutenant Malcolm plunged through the waves and again seized her as she was being beaten down out of sight by the fury of the storm-lashed sea.

The life-boat had followed swiftly, and as he again appeared upon a mighty wave a line with a life-preserver attached was thrown to him.

He grasped it firmly and a moment after was dragged into the boat with his precious burden.

Nellie was still as motionless and limp as though dead.

"Are all saved, Kendrick?" he asked the officer in charge of the boat.

"Not a soul lost, I believe, sir."

"Then pull for the cutter, for I fear this lady is dead."

The men obeyed with a will, and after a fierce struggle the boat reached the side and all were safely taken on board where those in the other life-craft had preceded them.

"Out of seven on board, sir, all are saved, thanks to your noble courage, for had it not been for you, sir, my carelessness would have cost us all our lives," said the yacht's skipper, as Malcolm stepped on deck.

"You were reckless, sir, but you are frank to admit your fault."

"Pray make yourself and friends at home."

And Andrew Malcolm carried Nellie Regis into the cabin, followed by the surgeon of the cutter.

There were gathered the other three ladies of the party, and all gazed anxiously at the white face of the beautiful girl.

"Is she dead?" was asked, in a low whisper.

The surgeon laid his ear to the heart and listened.

"No; her heart beats faintly and there is hope," was his reply, and he began the work of resuscitating the maiden.

Half an hour after he came on deck, where Andrew Malcolm in dry clothing was pacing to and fro with anxious face, and said:

"The lady asks to see you, sir."

"She is herself again then?"

"Yes, sir; and wishes to thank you."

Andrew Malcolm entered the cabin and Nellie Regis stepped forward and grasped his hands, while she said:

"You saved my life, and the courage of yourself and your gallant crew saved us all."

"I saw your danger, so headed for the yacht."

"I deem myself fortunate in having been of service."

"May I ask where you would wish to land, for we have no ladies' wardrobe on board, and the sooner you change your wet clothes the better, though we certainly are glad to entertain you," and the young officer smiled.

"My own home, Sea Vale Hall, is the nearest place, I suppose, sir."

"Ah yes, Sea Vale Haven is but a mile distant."

"May I ask if this is Miss Regis, of Sea Vale?"

"Yes, sir; and you are Captain Boyd, of the Vidette?"

"No, the captain is away on leave and left me in command."

"I am Lieutenant Andrew Malcolm."

Nellie bowed and presented her friends, and half an hour after bade the handsome officer farewell as she stepped ashore on the Sea Vale dock, while she begged him to breakfast with herself and mother the next morning, adding:

"We are in mourning, sir, or I would ask yourself and officers to meet my friends at dinner."

Malcolm promised to be on hand at nine o'clock the following morning, as he did not intend to put to sea that night, and saw the wrecked party depart for the mansion.

Fortunately Mrs. Regis had supposed that the yacht had put into some haven along the coast to escape the storm, so was not very uneasy about them, and seeing all safe she was not shocked by the catastrophe.

Carriages were ordered and the party were driven to their homes, while Nellie, after donning dry clothing and eating a warm supper, retired to her room.

"Will I never get that face out of my memory?"

"I owe him my life, and it seems to me as though my heart goes out to him as never before it did to man."

"Heaven have mercy upon me, should I love him, for never can he be to me more than he now is."

It was long before she closed her eyes, and that some deep sorrow was hers was evident, for she wept and moaned bitterly.

But bright and early she was up, and feeling none the worse for her experience of the day before, she dressed hastily and went downstairs.

Her mother was already up, and greeted her with a kiss, while she said:

"I have been admiring that beautiful vessel, Nellie, that lies in the haven, and I am most anxious to meet your gallant preserver."

"Is he handsome?"

"I thought so, mother."

"His name is Malcolm, you said?"

"Yes, Andrew Malcolm, and he is a lieutenant at present in command of the cutter."

"He sprung overboard himself to save you?"

"Yes, mother, when the yacht went over some were able to cling to her; but I was torn off, along with two of the gentlemen, and swept far off from them."

"I saw the cutter and thought she was going to turn over me; but just then a form sprung into the sea, followed by others, and Lieutenant Malcolm grasped me in his arms."

"I was faint, frightened, and a wave struck me with such force that I became unconscious."

"They say that another wave tore me away from the lieutenant, but he dove and caught me again, and we were picked up and taken on board."

"When I returned to consciousness, I was in the cutter's cabin and the surgeon was trying to revive me."

"But a boat is putting ashore now," and from the window Nellie and her mother watched the boat land, a tall uniformed form step ashore and come on toward the mansion.

A few moments after a servant ushered Lieutenant Malcolm into the library, and entering Nellie presented her mother, who thanked the brave officer with tears in voice and eyes for saving the life of her only child.

It was a delightful breakfast that the three had together, and as the lieutenant said that he would not sail until the next day, for he had a few repairs to make to his vessel, Mrs. Regis proposed that Nellie should take a horseback ride in the afternoon with the young officer, who was to return to dinner with them.

This programme was carried out, and the

next morning when Nellie arose and looked out of her window upon the Sound, she saw that the cutter was gone.

Dropping upon her knees with clasped hands she gazed out upon the waters and cried piteously:

"God have mercy upon me! for I love that man with all my heart and soul."

"Nellie, I am ashamed of you!"

"Have you forgotten Regis Rossmore?"

The words were sharply uttered, and the speaker was Mrs. Regis who had, unseen by her daughter, entered the room and heard the piteous outburst that welled up from Nellie's heart at the knowledge that she loved Andrew Malcolm.

CHAPTER XXII.

A WOMAN'S WARNING.

WHEN the stage rolled away from Hank's Ranch, bearing with it Duke Damar and Roger Malcolm, the Californian, Surgeon Frank Powell and Regis Rossmore were standing together.

"There goes a noble fellow, and he is no more guilty of the crime of which many suspect him than I am," said the artist.

"I am glad to hear you say so, sir; but circumstantial evidence has hanged many a man and will hang many more; but I do not, with you, believe Damar capable of such a crime, and I only hope that he will be able to prove his innocence."

"It can only be done in one way."

"How is that?"

"By finding the murderer."

"True; and that will be no easy task; but do you take the next coach westward, Mr. Rossmore?"

"Yes."

"I would be glad to have you return with me to the fort for a visit."

"I thank you, Surgeon Powell, but I am anxious to finish some sketches out here and return to paint them, for I am behind in my work."

"Well, any time you find it convenient to take a trip West let me know, and I will be glad to have you as a guest at the fort."

"Now I must endeavor to find out who this Double of Buffalo Bill really is."

"It will be no easy work."

"It will be if I meet him, as I hope to do," was the significant reply.

"It seems remarkable that a man should attempt to impersonate a scout so well known as is Buffalo Bill."

"Yes; and still more so that he should look like him, for Buffalo Bill is a man among men in appearance as well as in deeds."

"So I have heard; but there sounds the stage-horn, so my coach is coming and I must leave you."

Soon after a coach drove up to the ranch, and mounting the box with the driver, Regis Rossmore waved an adieu to Surgeon Powell and was borne swiftly away on the Overland Trail to the westward.

"Hank, I want a room, what books you have with which to kill time, and no one to know that I am here."

"All right, Pard Powell, it shall be as yer say, fer yer wants ter lie in ambush."

"Yes, so to speak."

"To catch that Double of Buffalo Bill's?"

"Yes."

"Wal, maybe he'll come along soon, and ef he do I'll be sart'in ter notify yer."

"That is what I want you to do."

And Surgeon Powell went into hiding, hoping that the mysterious Double of Buffalo Bill would return to the ranch.

But the day passed, night also and the next day, and not possessing the patience of an Indian, Surgeon Powell decided to give up waiting longer.

The next morning he took his departure at dawn, and had reached the spot where Duke Damar had told him that he had been turned from the trail by the mysterious Indian girl, when who should he see in the path before him but that very personage?

He drew rein at once, not knowing who might be beyond the girl; but then he rode on slowly and soon halted a few feet from her.

He looked at her attentively, and if she was a white woman in disguise he was unable to discover it.

She was in the same gorgeous costume she had worn when Damon had seen her, but rode a white horse, one as white as snow, from the tip of his ears to the end of his long tail.

"Is the red maiden wandering alone, so far from her people?" said the Surgeon Scout, gazing upon the really beautiful face with surprise, for never before had he seen an Indian so lovely.

He addressed her in the Sioux language; but with an impatient toss of her head she replied:

"I speak the language of the pale-faces, and I would tell the mighty medicine-man that death lies in his path."

"Ah! you know me?"

"You are the White Beaver, the medicine-man from the big fort."

"I am."

"You will die if you follow this trail."

"Who will kill me?"

"Your foes."

"Who are they?"

"The Red Rose must not tell."

"Are they red-skins or pale-faces?"

"The Red Rose will not tell."

"Then I will not ask you to do so."

"But why would they kill me?"

"You are their foe."

"How many are there of them?"

"Enough to kill the White Beaver, great chief that he is."

"Why do you warn me of danger?"

"I do not wish to see you killed."

"What am I to you?"

"No more than any other human being whose life I can save."

"Ah! well, I will be warned by you and take another trail."

"I will lead you."

The Red Rose wheeled her horse as she spoke and rode along in front of the Surgeon Scout, bending away from the trail which he had been following.

Frank Powell had made up his mind to one course, and that was to no longer leave these ambushers in peace, whoever they might be.

After several miles they came to the spot where the strange girl had parted with Duke Damar.

Here she halted and said:

"The Red Rose goes her way now, and there is the trail for the White Beaver to follow."

"Yes; but will not the Red Rose tell me who she is?"

"The White Beaver has eyes."

"Yes, and shall I tell you what they have discovered?"

"What has the White Beaver seen?" she asked, quickly.

"I may be wrong, but you have not the features, the form nor the actions of an Indian girl, no matter how much you may appear like one."

"Your disguise is a good one."

He looked straight in the face of the girl as he spoke; but there was no start as he had expected, no look of guilt.

"The White Beaver's eyes are not as keen as he thought them."

"Good-by."

With this she wheeled her snow-white mustang and shot away like an arrow.

For some moments the Surgeon Scout looked after her in silence, his brain busy.

Then he muttered to himself:

"I may be mistaken, but I think not."

With this he turned his horse into the trail.

But he did not ride toward the fort, as he had been going, but on the contrary started on the back track toward Hank's Ranch.

Nor did he go back on the track he had come with the Indian girl, for he took the regular trail, on which lay the ambushed foes awaiting him.

"I will surprise them by coming from the wrong direction," he said aloud as he rode slowly along.

The Surgeon Scout had suddenly recalled the position where he and Duke Damar had seen the ambush, and he remembered that it was easy of approach from the westward.

Here he doubted not those who meant to ambush him were then awaiting his coming, and he had daringly determined to flank them.

How many there were he did not care.

He was a man to depend upon himself, to allow no odds to frighten him.

If the ambushers were looking for him to come from one direction, he would certainly gain an advantage by coming from another.

Who they were he was anxious to know.

They had in some mysterious way discovered that Duke Damar was to pass that way, and had gone there to kill him.

Now they were on the watch for him, and he wished to know just who and what these secret foes were.

"I will find out too," he said to himself as he rode along.

He was now all caution, constantly on the alert, and his repeating-rifle was ready in hand.

He rode along slowly until he came near the spot, and here he dismounted.

Fastening his rein over the horn of his saddle he said to his horse:

"Faithful, you just wait here until I call you."

The horse nodded his head as though to say:

"I understand you."

Then the Surgeon Scout loosened his revolvers in his belt, grasped his rifle firmly and went forward on foot.

He had calculated well, for he had gone but a few hundred yards when he came in sight of the ambush where he had before noticed the tracks.

There, standing behind a thicket, he saw four horses.

"I have four to deal with; now for the riders of these horses."

They were Indian ponies and equipped as braves equip their steeds.

"That does not prove that they are redskins," he muttered, carrying out this thought. The thicket he could not approach nearer without being seen, should any one be on the watch in that direction.

The men he knew must be lying in the thicket, which was on a rise and commanded the approach along the trail in the other direction.

He looked about him carefully on all sides, but could see no way to get nearer and not be seen.

"I hate to, but I must do it," he said, and his face became stern and determined as he slowly brought his rifle to his shoulder.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FLANKING AN AMBUSCADE.

SURGEON POWELL, whatever he was aiming at, took a slow and true aim.

Then his finger touched the trigger, and there came a sharp report.

This was followed in quick succession by three others, wild snorts of fright, plunging hoofs, and then as the smoke drifted from before his eyes the Surgeon Scout saw three of the horses lying motionless upon the ground, and a fourth, evidently wounded, tugging fiercely at his stake-rope.

Another quick shot brought him to earth, and then, placing a small bugle to his lips the surgeon gave a winding call, as though for cavalry.

Quickly he dropped the bugle and seized his rifle, firing rapidly as he saw a form appear in the edge of the thicket.

The form quickly disappeared, but the Surgeon sent rattling after it a number of shots at random.

Then he gave another bugle-call, while up to his side came galloping his horse.

Then there rung from his lips the command: "Squad forward! Charge!"

Throwing himself into his saddle he spurred forward at a run straight for the thicket.

The horses of the ambushers were lying where they had fallen, and into the thicket the surgeon rode, his steed suddenly swerving violently.

"I thought so," he said, as he dismounted and bent over a human form.

"I did not think I could miss him."

"Now to see who he is, for to catch the others is beyond possibility in the rugged ground beyond here."

The body on the ground was apparently that of an Indian, for it was painted and in red-skin dress.

A bullet-wound in the side showed what had brought him down.

But a close inspection showed that the man was painted to disguise his white skin.

His beard was of several days' growth, his hair long, and that he was white there was no manner of doubt.

He had a bow and arrows, but he also carried a fine repeating-rifle and revolvers.

A few gold pieces in his pocket and a handsome diamond ring upon his finger were all of value about him other than his arms.

"He is either a renegade living among the Indians, or he is a road-agent thus disguised to carry out some plot of devilry," muttered the surgeon.

Raising the body in his arms he carried it to a ditch he had observed further back and placed it in it.

Then he threw earth in upon it until he had covered it wholly, and carrying several large logs placed them over it to protect it from the wolves.

Upon the four dead ponies he could find nothing to prove who had been their riders; but a close examination caused him to think that they must have been white men masquerading as redskins.

"Well, I have killed their horses though I hated to do so, and brought down one of their number, while the remainder have scattered on foot."

"Now to see where they were lying in wait."

He soon found the spot, and there was one proof that they were white men, for there were little piles of shavings where each one had been sitting, showing that they had been whittling with their knives.

"Redskins never do else than watch when in ambush," he muttered.

Having discovered this much, he went about trying to find the trails left by the men.

He saw where the man had run toward their horses, but to meet his death, and then where the others had bounded away through the thicket to reach the rough hill-land beyond, doubtless believing that the soldiers were upon them.

Returning to his horse he mounted and rode back upon the trail to where he had parted with the Indian girl.

Taking her trail he set off at a canter to follow it, saying:

"I will see where she goes and what she has to do with these renegade masqueraders."

"Now, I am more than ever convinced that she is also white."

As before the trail led him into the canyon at the upper end of which dwelt the old trapper.

"I will find out if the trapper has seen the specter at the canyon this time," he muttered as he rode along.

At last he came in sight of the cabin on the rocks, and instantly there was a roar and a chorus of savage yelps.

"The grizzly and the wolves are at home," he said with a smile, as he reached the bottom of the path.

There at the top stood the grizzly savage, and with blazing eyes, gazing down at him as he paced the length of his chain.

On the rocks above the wolves crouched, howling dismally.

"That is a party I do not care to tackle, so I'll hail," and the Surgeon Scout called out aloud:

"Trapper Dick, ho!"

But no answer came, and the Surgeon Scout concluded that Lone Dick was away from home, doubtless looking after his traps or hunting game.

As he rode on up the canyon the wild animals on guard at the cabin ceased their uproar, greatly to the joy of the surgeon's horse, who showed real fright at the savage chorus they had kept up.

At the head of the canyon the surgeon came full upon the old trapper.

He was mounted upon his raw-boned horse and had a deer behind him.

"Wal, Pard Doc, is you in these heur parts ag'in?"

"So it seems, Lone Dick; but I am follerin' a trail."

"Thar's no trail in this canyon."

"What do you call that?" and he pointed to the tracks left by the horse of the Indian girl.

"Oh, thet don't count."

"Why?"

"It's ther specter's trail."

"So I know; but did you see her?"

"She passed up early this mornin'."

"How was she dressed?"

"All in white, as before, pard."

"And her horse?"

"Were white as milk."

"She had no Indian toggery on?"

"Not she, fer she hain't no Injun sperit."

Surgeon Powell was mystified.

He could not understand how it was that the Indian girl changed into a seeming ghost.

The tracks up the canyon were those of the white pony she had ridden, for he had studied them well.

"Now the trapper stated that he had seen a woman in white, and not an Indian girl."

Not once had the tracks of the white pony halted by a stream where the paint could be washed off and the costume changed.

The surgeon was mystified.

"Pard Doc, you is follerin' that trail a second time, so you jist look out fer bad luck to come to yer."

"I'll risk it."

"You kin risk fightin' humans, and yer takes big chances with 'em, from all I hears of yer; but goin' ag'in' sperits o' dead folks are not ther thing, and I begs yer ter let up, fer I likes yer, an' I doesn't want ter see yer tarn up yer toes, does yer hear?"

"Well, Lone Dick, I thank you for your advice; but I'll go on as far as this trail leads, or I can follow it, and then return and stop with you for the night, if I can."

"Yer is welcome, pard; but it's seldom I invites a man into my cabin."

"I appreciate the kindness shown me the more, then, Lone Dick," and the Surgeon Scout continued on his way up the canyon.

But, good trailer that he was, he was soon compelled to give up following the tracks of the white pony, be its rider what it might, as all trace was lost at a small stream that he came to.

Returning to the cabin of the trapper, he staked his horse out to feed in the canyon, and enjoyed a long chat with Lone Dick until supper-time.

The trapper had another tempting supper to place before his guest, and the night passed away without interruption, when the surgeon started again upon the trail to the fort.

"The more I see of that old trapper, the more he is a mystery to me."

"Is he really in league with this strange girl, or does he believe her to be a spirit?"

"I confess I am at fault regarding him; but I have set out to fathom the mystery, and fathom it I will."

"I am confident that the old man left the cabin after I was asleep, and got back early, for his moccasins were wet with dew, and I saw his trail in the canyon through the wet grass, and he rode, too, while he told me he had just gotten up when I called to him this morning."

"I tried to wake up and yet, for the life of me I could not do so, and I almost believe that I was given a drug in my coffee to make me sleep."

"Still this may be only suspicion; but I do not understand the old man anyhow."

"But there is much else that I do not understand about goings on out on this border, and I will get Buffalo Bill to help me find out just what it all means."

So saying to himself the surgeon held on his way to the fort.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WAS IT A CONFESSION?

THE two days that Duke Damar spent at The Retreat, were delightful ones to him, and also to the two brothers so lately united after long years of separation.

Then too May seemed to enjoy the visit of the young soldier.

They rode together through the beautiful country, walked together about the estate, or sat upon the piazza talking of many things.

Among his accomplishments Duke Damar sketched well, and he also possessed a fine voice and accompanied himself upon the piano.

All this was dangerous pastime for the young girl.

She had been much in city society, young as she was, had traveled about extensively with her father, entertained the best of people at The Retreat, and had been educated at a fashionable boarding-school upon the Hudson.

She was beautiful, accomplished, rich and had many admirers; but somehow never had her thoughts so dwelt upon one man as they had upon the young soldier.

He seemed *sui generis* to her, and his dark handsome face constantly haunted her.

She had never breathed a word to her father about what she had read about him in the papers, and she wondered how it was that she found herself becoming more and more wrapped up in a man against whom there was the suspicion of his having committed the foulest murder.

"I wish he would speak to me about it," she said to herself.

"Does he know that I am aware of it, I wonder?"

One day the two were together, seated in an arbor on the hillside, which commanded a grand view of the surrounding country.

Duke Damar had a scrap-book before him and had just concluded a sketch, which he had not allowed the maiden to see.

She also had a scrap-book resting upon her lap, and was sketching with no inartistic hand.

"I have a sketch here, Miss Malcolm, which I wish you to give me your permission to keep," he said, as he finished it.

"What is it?"

"May I have it?"

"Certainly."

"It is a picture of yourself; see!"

Her face flushed as she gazed at it, and involuntarily she said:

"How exquisite!"

"So I think," and he fixed his eyes full upon her.

"I meant the sketch—the work," she said, blushing.

"I meant the subject; but I may have it?"

She laughed roguishly and asked:

"The subject?"

It was his time to flush now, but he said:

"I would not dare place my hopes beyond the sketch."

"I, too, have a sketch here I would like to keep, with your permission," she said, quickly.

"You have it."

"See!"

She held it up to him and he saw that it was a sketch of himself as he sat there intent upon his work.

"You have wielded a skillful pencil in that sketch, Miss Malcolm."

She very nearly gave utterance to the words:

"Because it was a labor of love."

But she checked herself and replied:

"It is a coincidence that both of us, with such a superb view before us of hill, valley and river, should have devoted ourselves to portrait sketching."

"Our minds seemed to run in the same groove for once," he replied.

She felt that they were upon dangerous ground, so changed the subject with:

"Lieutenant Damar—"

"I am not a lieutenant now, you remember, Miss Malcolm."

"Ah, yes! well, I was going to ask you why you went back to speak to that—that—peddler the other day?"

"Did you know him, Miss Malcolm?"

"Yes."

"Let us be frank with each other about this matter, for I knew him, too."

"I feared it."

"Better is it so, than that he may do you or your father harm."

"He is capable of anything."

"I feared so; but I saw that you were alarmed when we drove up, and as you did not denounce the man I looked closely at him."

"I am not one to forget a face once seen, and so I recalled the man, and so went after him, telling him that I would put a detective upon his track and if he came in this neighborhood again to frighten you, he should hang."

"It was most kind of you, and, to tell the truth I fear for poor Roger, though I did not let him suspect it."

"The truth is, Mr. Damar, my unfortunate

brother Roger was a *mauvais sujet* from the first.

"He felt jealous at the love father and I felt for my adopted brother Andrew, and he did many things to cause us the greatest uneasiness."

"He on one occasion attempted Andrew's life, but this my adopted brother never knew, for father discovered it."

"Much money was paid by father to keep Andrew out of severe trouble, and at last he said he would go away never to return, if father would give him ten thousand dollars."

"This father did, and within a year he was back again demanding more."

"Father yielded, and the next we heard of him was from a letter written in prison."

"He had broken into a house, been captured and wrote my father to send money to defend him."

"Father refused, Roger was sent to prison for a term of years, and incidentally we learned that Andrew, whom he had so hated, had sent a great deal of money to try and get him off, but in vain."

"We believed him in prison, until he came here that fatal night, and now I am sure that he came for one purpose in particular."

"And that was?"

"To take my father's life."

"Yet why should he?"

"Because father made a will giving his fortune equally to Andrew, Roger and myself."

"This will he has never changed, and had he died suddenly, it would have stood, and Roger would have gotten his share, which amounts to half a million, for our estate is a very rich one."

"Ah! I see the motive now, and I believe you are right."

"With such a will in existence, Miss Malcolm, that man will stop at nothing, so I would urge you to ask your father to make another, and let it be known how he disposes of his property."

"You think his life in danger if he does not?"

"I am sure that it is, unless—"

"Unless what, Mr. Damar?"

"You allow me to arrest this man and let the law take him in charge."

"No, no, for it would kill my father."

"Then urge him to change his will."

"I dare not."

"Then take your uncle into your confidence and get him to do so."

"Did you see how pained father looked when Uncle Roger asked him where his namesake was?"

"Yes; and he shielded his sins by saying that he had been a trifle wild and was off sowing his wild oats."

"So he did; but father is proud and would not see his name sullied."

"Then tell your uncle all, and let him urge your father to make his will, for he said he meant to do so, and, feeling that he is cut off, Roger Malcolm will no longer seek his life."

"I will do as you say, Mr. Malcolm, for it is a wise precaution."

"And remember, if he should give you trouble I hold a charge of murder over him and can force him out of the country."

"It is a fearful charge to lay upon a man, that of the murder of a fellow-being."

May Malcolm spoke slowly, and she hardly knew that she gave utterance to the words until she saw the face of Duke Damar become the hue of death and heard the words hissed through his shut teeth:

"No one more than I, Miss Malcolm, know how fearful a punishment it is to have the hand of Cain upon my brow."

She sprang to her feet with a startled cry, for the words of Duke Damar seemed to be a confession of his guilt.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MASTER OF SEA VALE HALL.

DUKE DAMAR was startled at the manner of May Malcolm, and he saw that her face had turned very pale.

Her own words had caused the bitterness in his breast to well up, and he had said what he had almost without knowing it, or caring for what he uttered.

"Miss Malcolm, sit down again and let me explain what I said."

She sunk into her seat in silence.

How could he explain that which had appeared a confession of his guilt?

But she would hear what he had to say.

The cruel charge that she had read against him came up into her mind, and his own words seemed to stamp all as true.

"We were speaking of the charge of murder against your brother, Miss Malcolm?"

"Yes, but speak of him as Roger Malcolm, not as my brother," she said, with a shudder.

"I will, for he is unworthy of such a sister."

"Although the nurse was killed in your father's room, and the man whom I shot seemed guiltless at least of that murder, I yet can be led to believe him guilty."

"Your brother had a knife which was stained with blood, as also were his hands and clothing, while his companion's knife had not been taken from its sheath."

"This points conclusively to your brother as the murderer, and yet he may not be."

"He certainly is."

"So it would seem from circumstantial evidence, and yet he may be guiltless of the act."

"The fact that he was with the man would condemn him to punishment in a court of law, and this is the power to hold over him, and to make him keep away from you."

"But I spoke of this that I might tell you something of my own life."

"Yes?" and May breathed more freely.

"I said a while since that no one knew, more than I did, the cruel punishment of bearing the brand of Cain upon my brow."

"I will tell you, Miss Malcolm, that circumstantial evidence to-day holds me as guilty of murder."

"Let me tell you the story, bitter as it is, and show you why I resigned from the army, and what a cross I have to bear, for those who were my friends now avoid me, and I am under suspicion of being a very Cain."

"Will you hear my story, Miss Malcolm?"

She could have saved him the bitterness of telling her the cruel story by saying that she already knew all.

But she wished to hear all that he had to say about the charge against him, and she said:

"I will accept your confidence, Mr. Damar, if you will give it to me."

"Thank you."

Then, after a pause, in a low voice he told her all that had occurred to him to mar his life.

In conclusion he added:

"I do not ask you to believe or disbelieve me."

"I only say that this brand is upon me, and that if I cannot erase it, if I cannot prove that I am not guilty, then I will gladly lie down to rest forever in the grave."

She held forth her hand and said:

"Fathom the mystery for your own sake."

"Let us go to the mansion now."

"And I can keep this sketch of you, now that I know all?"

"Yes."

"I thank you."

The next day Duke Damar bade farewell to the hospitable trio at The Retreat and started for his own home.

"Don't fail to hunt down the man whose deed you get the credit of, Damar," said Roger Malcolm, as he grasped his hand in farewell.

"I shall hope for good news from you, Mr. Damar," May had said.

"Yes; or an end to all this bitterness," was the reply.

And he drove away upon his way to his home.

He had not deemed it necessary to advise his aunt of his coming, so that lady was considerably surprised to see him drive up to the door one pleasant afternoon.

She had recovered from her attack of illness, Nellie had returned to her boarding-school and the widow was alone in the mansion with the large retinue of servants which had always been kept up at Sea Vale Hall.

"What! back again?" said Mrs. Regis.

"Yes, aunt; and to stay, for I have resigned from the army."

"Resigned!"

And Mrs. Regis looked positively appalled.

"I have."

"But why?"

"Because my numerous friends had heard of Delancy Redfield's death, and, with others hereabouts, seemed to consider me his murderer," he said, bitterly.

"I fear you will not be happy here, Duke."

"I do not expect to be."

"People will talk, you know."

"Yes, I know; and so they still talk about me?"

"Yes."

"Let them."

"Do you expect to live it down, Duke?"

"Aunt Regis, this is my home."

"Here I was born, my father and two grandfathers before me, and it will be a brave man or woman who comes across my threshold to accuse me of murder."

"I shall go as I please, come as I please, and to those who speak to me I shall speak."

"To those who cut me I shall show my utter contempt."

"I shall enter no man's house, and by my invitation none shall come here, though your friends are ever welcome; but they must keep a civil tongue in their mouths about me."

"I am under a cloud as black and damning as hell itself, I have been forced to hate those I believed my friends; I have had to give up my profession as a soldier, when I hoped to win rank and fame with my sword."

"I have had burned into my breast by foul suspicion the brand of Cain, and to escape all I have come to my home, my boyhood's home, where Delancy and myself were boys together, where the happiest moments of my life were passed, and where I can be near the grave of the man whom it is said I murdered."

"Now, Aunt Regis, if you wish my respect,

if you care for my friendship, let this subject be dropped between us."

The woman fairly shrunk under his blazing eyes.

Never before had she seen him so moved, and for a moment she could utter no word.

Then she said, as she laid her hand upon his shoulder:

"My poor, dear Duke, you have indeed been made to suffer deeply, and the iron has entered into your very soul."

"Not one word, not one look shall you ever have from me to cause you a moment's pang, and all that I can do to drive the clouds away I will do."

He made no reply but bent forward and pressed his lips to her forehead.

She shuddered as his lips touched her, and he saw it and turned away, going to his own room.

But from that day he was master there, and his aunt and the servants quickly realized that fact.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TIE THAT WAS BINDING.

NELLIE REGIS sat in her comfortable room, in the fashionable boarding school where she was a pupil, and an open letter she held in her hand.

With wealth at her command, she was able to pay for a room for herself alone, and she had beautified it with her own hands in many ways.

There were articles of *virtu*, *bric-a-brac*, paintings and many little things of woman's handiwork, souvenirs of school-girl friends and others far away.

But her eyes were not upon the beauty of her room nor upon the grand view spread out before her from the window.

Neither was she reading the open letter, for her eyes had a far-away look that showed that she was in deepest meditation.

The letter she had just read and it was from her mother.

After speaking of various matters, the letter went on to say:

"Now I have a surprise for you."

"It is that your Cousin Duke has resigned from the army and has returned home to live."

"He has been here more than a week, and those who thought they could crush him by coldness have found that he utterly ignores them."

"He said that he came here to be master of Sea Vale and master I assure you he is, and it would be dangerous to thwart him, for the Damar temper in him is aroused."

"He has ordered a yacht purchased for him, and spends his days in horseback riding or gunning."

"I really feel anxious about him, for something seems to prey heavily upon his mind."

"Can it be that he really is guilty, as rumor says that he is, or did you swear truthfully on that fatal night?"

"I would not be surprised now at anything that Duke did, he is so much changed from the light-hearted fellow that he was two years ago, when he was home on leave."

"I had a letter from Regis Rossmore this morning and he is on his way East, from his sketching tour on the frontier, and says that he has some lovely bits of scenery."

"He also wrote me what Duke only casually mentioned, that he met your cousin West, and was saved from being robbed by his daring charge upon some road-agents who had stopped the stage-coach in which he was a passenger."

"It must have been a desperate affair, from what Regis writes, as a fellow-passenger was seriously wounded and two of the robbers killed by Duke and his companion, who was a Surgeon Powell, of whom you have heard your cousin speak, and who also has some outlandish name given him by the Indians."

"It would not surprise me, my daughter, if Regis stopped to see you on his way back, for you know how dearly he loves you, and I have written Madam Vassar to give him *carte blanche* to see you should he call."

"You know my wishes regarding Regis, Nellie, and I hope you will govern yourself accordingly."

Such was the tenor of the letter, and Nellie Regis certainly did not look happy over its reception.

As she sat thus in thought, the letter in her hand, a knock at her door startled her.

"It's only me, miss, and I'm ather havin' a card fer yer swate silt," said a red-headed daughter of Erin entering, and who was not unmindful of many little "tips" which Nellie had given her, and which she repaid by devotion to her service and "blarney."

Nellie took the card, and her face paled slightly, as she read the name.

It was:

"REGIS ROSSMORE."

Then followed the rather indefinite address:

"United States of America."

"Say to the gentleman that I will be down at once, O'Hara."

"Yis, miss, and a handsome gent he's ather being, and ginorous as a duke o' the ould sod, for he gave me this, miss," and O'Hara, as the girls called Bridgetine, showed a dollar bill which had been slipped into her hands by the visitor.

Hastily putting on her hat and throwing a wrap about her, Nellie descended to the parlors.

Regis Rossmore, looking very handsome, and elegantly dressed, arose to greet her.

"I am very glad to see you, and could not refrain from coming by, after the news I heard in a letter received from your sweet mother, of how you had so nearly lost your life."

"Yes, Mr. Rossmore, it was a very narrow escape, and the one who saved me from death risked his life to do so; but I am going for a walk: will you join me?"

Regis Rossmore was only too happy to do so, for there were several visitors in the parlor.

They strolled out into the grounds, and Nellie, leading the way, directed her steps toward a rustic arbor that overlooked the river.

It stood on a point of land, and was all to itself.

"What a place for a tête-à-tête, Nellie!" said the artist, with a smile.

"That is why I came here."

"I feel flattered, indeed, for you have seemed to shun me of late."

"Is it to be wondered at?"

"Why should you?"

"Do you ask that question, Regis Rossmore?"

"Are you still unforgiving?"

"No, I forgave you, when you pleaded your deep love for me as an excuse for your act."

"Nellie, it was my love."

"Let me tell you that the moment I saw you I loved you."

"Knowing that you would have many suitors I sought to win you."

"Your mother, as an old friend of my father, urged me on by her willingness for you to become my wife, for I confessed to her my idolatrous love for you."

"When I knew what dangerous rivals I had, I was in despair."

"I tried to win you, and I felt that you cared for me."

"Then it was that I thought if you were secretly bound to me you would think of no one else, and I did what I did and then pleaded forgiveness."

"It was a sin, a great sin on your part, Regis Rossmore, to plot against me as you did."

"I did plot, yes, but it was not to harm you."

"You invited me to the entertainment at your home, and I asked if I could bring a friend."

"I came with my friend, and when that evening we sold forfeits, I was told to select a lady to become my wife."

"Your mother, you remember, was the one over whose head the forfeits were sold."

"I selected you, and you, Nellie, made no objection."

"Did I suspect that your friend was a justice of the peace with full authority to marry us?"

"Did I suspect that you had in your pocket the marriage license, and that I was legally becoming your wife?"

"Oh, no, it was a cruel plot against me, and though I forgave you when you confessed all, and told me your reason, I have become more and more angered at it since then."

"I told you, Regis Rossmore, that you might claim me as your wife three months after I had left school."

"I did so because I admired you, and I thought then that I cared for you."

"I thought, and hoped I could learn to love you by the time you sought to make me publicly your wife."

"But the more I think of the fraud you practiced upon me, the more bitter I became, until now, I frankly tell you, Regis Rossmore, I almost believe that I hate you."

"No! no! Nellie, for God's sake do not say that."

"I will leave you, I will go far away and do all in my power to win you, only do not decide against me now."

"Why should I not, for I do not, nor ever can love you."

"Do you love another?" he asked suddenly, fixing his eyes full upon her face.

He saw her blush, and she knew that he saw it, and expected an outburst of jealous anger from him.

"Do you love another, Nellie?"

"You have no right to question me, Mr. Rossmore."

"Yes, I have, for you are my wife, bound by a tie that cannot be set aside, so I have a right to ask."

"Do you love another, Nellie?"

He spoke in kindness, not in anger, and she replied:

"No man have I allowed to tell me of his love, since I learned that I was your—your—oh! must I say it—wife?"

"No man would I allow to do so."

"But I wish to be free, for I am but human, and I might love another were not this pall hanging over me of being secretly bound to you."

"Release me, Regis, I beg of you."

"I cannot, for it is not in my power to do so."

"Then give me one year from the day I am eighteen."

"When will that be?"

"The day after I finish school."

"I will grant you the time, Nellie; but remember, you are my wife."

"My honor, sir, is in my own keeping, and I hold my own respect more dear than I do the fraudulent tie that binds me to you," was the haughty response.

He flinched under her words and replied:

"One year, then, from next June I give you, and I implore you, Nellie, to try and love me."

"If you cannot, if you will not consent to become my wife before the world, then I will go with you to get a divorce, will set you free and keep our secret, while I go back to the wilds where I so long remained and strove to make a name to offer to a beautiful ideal which she would be proud of."

"That name I am winning, that ideal I have found in you, Nellie, and I hope the dreams I have had of happiness with you, will not be rudely dashed aside when my year of penance is ended."

"Now I will leave you; but do not forget me; think of me often, and—love me."

He escorted her to the door of the academy, grasped her hand and was gone, while she went quickly to her room and locking her door threw herself down upon the lounge and burst into tears, while she moaned:

"Do I love Regis Rossmore, or— No! no! no! no woman can hold two loves in her heart."

"I do not love Regis Rossmore, noble and kind though he is!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

DETECTIVES ON THE TRAIL.

WHEN Duke Damar learned from his aunt that the young artist, Regis Rossmore, was in New York, he at once sat down and wrote him, asking him to visit Sea Vale for a week or two.

He liked the artist immensely, and he remembered that he had been one to prove his stanch friend and defender when others turned against him.

Regis Rossmore liked to visit Sea Vale, for he was very much attached to Mrs. Regis, and so he accepted the invitation with pleasure.

He brought with him his Western sketches to show Duke, and among them was one from memory of the attack on the stage-coach and rescue by Damar and Powell.

He had likenesses that were very perfect of the two soldiers, Ribbon Moses, the old miner and himself, and the one of Roger Malcolm was by no means a bad likeness, showing a wonderful memory of faces in the artist.

"Will you make a painting of that one, Rossmore, with the figures one-sixteenth life-size for me and I will give you your price."

"If you wish it, Damar?"

"I do; and I will give you likenesses of the miner and of Powell to be exact, for you have Ribbon Moses's, mine and your own perfect."

"I will begin upon it as soon as I return, and you shall have it within a couple of months."

"On the door of the coach, I remember, is a picture of an Indian girl; but I will give you a face to put there, and I wish you to take much pains with it."

"Here, I will show you the sketch."

And Damar got the sketch he had made of May Malcolm, and, since his return home he had put in water-colors.

"What a face! is it an ideal one?" asked Regis Rossmore, with enthusiasm.

"It is an ideal face, I may say, for I have seen but one like it," was the reply.

"And that one in your imagination?"

"Yes; that one is in my memory, Rossmore, and ever will be."

"If I could paint as you do I would make it very beautiful."

"I will make it all that you could wish, Damar, on the panel of the coach-door."

"By the way, have you heard from your friend, Surgeon Powell?"

"Yes; I had a letter to-day."

"Indeed! he is well, I hope?"

"Yes."

"And still devoting more attention to scouting than to surgery?"

"Yes; for he has assistants at the fort who can look to the sick and wounded, while but few men are the scouts that Frank Powell is."

"Excepting Buffalo Bill, there are no equals to Powell as an Indian-fighter and trailer."

"Your friend Cody got over his wound?"

"Oh, yes; and is as good as new, Surgeon Powell writes me."

"It is a dangerous life those two men lead; but, by the way, has Buffalo Bill found his Double yet?"

"He has not, or had not when the letter was written."

And the two friends went for a stroll, which, oddly enough always led them to the cemetery on the ridge when Damar led the way; but when Regis Rossmore asked him to accompany him in a walk he always led him away from the spot which could but be filled with saddest memories for Duke Damar.

"I am glad that you have urged Regis to remain longer now the two weeks are up, for you seem to enjoy his society so," said Mrs. Regis one day to her nephew.

"Yes, I have begged him to spend the month out, and longer if he will, and when he returns

from Boston he will do so, for he goes there for a day or two."

Duke Damar had already gotten his little yacht, and it was one that he could handle himself, for he was a pretty good sailor, having been brought up upon the Sound, and learned how to sail a boat as a small boy.

He was wont to go sailing alone each day, for the artist was a "land lubber" he said, and was happier on dry land than when a mere plank stood between him and eternity.

"You must go for a sail, Rossmore, for you'll not get another chance, as to-morrow I will devote the whole day to you, it being your last here," said Duke Damar one day as the two stood at the dock at Sea Vale one afternoon.

"No, thank you, for I don't like the looks of the weather; but a pleasant sail and safe return."

Damar waved his hand, and the little two-ton sloop shot out from the shore, passed out of the cove, and was soon dancing along upon the waters of the Sound.

As he stood well out, he saw a cat-rigged boat coming down the coast, run into the cove, which was known as Sea Vale Haven, and land at the dock.

The artist was still there, seated in the arbor sketching, and Damar saw him point out toward his boat.

Then the cat-rig pushed off and stood out of the cove and followed in his wake.

He was some distance off, but as the boat seemed to wish to come up with him, he lay to.

The wind was now very light, and soon after died out altogether, under the pressure of a storm that was rising.

Duke Damar took in his jib, loosened his main-sail and close-reefed it, and then waited for the storm to burst, confident of riding it out in his stanch little craft.

Then he observed that the cat-rig was nearing him, under the pressure of oars, and one of the three men on board called out:

"We are anxious to reach you, sir, before the storm comes, for our boat will be swamped."

"Ay, ay, come along, for my craft can ride out a hurricane," was the reply.

It was now almost twilight, and the shore, six miles away, could not be seen, for the dark storm-clouds cast a deep gloom upon the waters.

A few moments more and the cat-boat came alongside and the men sprung on board the sloop.

"What, do you intend to desert your craft?" cried Damar, as they cast it adrift with sail up.

"Yes, sir, for she will go down."

"Not if you had lowered sail and made a ship-shape, for I would have taken her in tow with a long line, and cut her loose only when I found the sloop could not stand the strain."

"It is just as well, for that is only a light-weather craft, and won't be much loss, while this one indeed, is small for the blow that is booming down upon us, and we ain't much in the way of sailors."

Damar did not exactly like the looks of the men, and wishing to know why they had followed him he said:

"I saw you stand into the Sea Vale cove?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you have any business there?"

"Yes, sir, we did."

"May I ask what it is, for I am the master of Sea Vale Hall?"

"Yes, we asked the gent on the dock if he was Mr. Duke Damar, and he told us you had just gone off for a sail on the Sound, so we came after you."

"And what is your business with me, may I ask?"

"You are Mr. Duke Damar?"

"That is my name as I said."

"You are a lieutenant in the — Cavalry now stationed at Fort Forward on the frontier?"

"I was."

"And are not now?"

"No, for I resigned."

"Ah, yes; but you recently left the frontier?"

"Some two months ago."

"Well, Mr. Damar, I am sorry, sir, but I have orders for your arrest."

"For my arrest," and the face of Duke Damar became livid.

"Yes, sir."

"On what charge?"

"Murder."

"Murder?" gasped the young man.

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose it is the old charge of murdering my cousin, Delancy Redfield, but I was cleared of that?"

"No, sir, it is on another charge."

"In God's name who am I accused of murdering now?"

"You were in California some months ago?"

"Yes, half a year ago."

"In San Francisco?"

"Yes, I was sent there for a number of recruits."

"That is where the charge is made against you."

Duke Damar had regained his coolness now and laughed.

"It is no laughing matter, Mr. Damar, for I am a detective from San Francisco, and with my brother officers have the papers, here they are, to arrest you and carry you back with us to stand your trial."

"In the name of Heaven, do you mean what you say?"

"Here are the papers, sir."

"And who is it that I am said to have murdered?"

"A woman, sir!"

"Great God!" and the head was bowed in an agony of grief.

"Quick, sir, the storm is upon us!" cried the detective, and as he uttered the words there came a blinding flash of lightning, a terrific peal of thunder, and the winds came howling over the waters driving a wall of foam before it that threatened to engulf the little sloop and send it to the bottom.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BUFFALO BILL IN SEARCH OF HIS DOUBLE.

WHEN Surgeon Powell returned to the fort, all were anxious to learn how Duke Damar had taken his having to resign his position in the army.

The surgeon arrived after dark, so that it was not at once known that he had returned.

His first visitor was Buffalo Bill, who was able to go about once more and felt almost himself again.

At the request of the surgeon, Buffalo Bill remained to supper with him, and the two had barely finished the meal which Frank Powell's colored servant had placed before them, when a party of officers dropped in.

"Back again, Powell, and I am glad to see you," said one.

"Didn't get into any trouble, did you?"

"Did you go further than Hank's Ranch?"

"We were getting anxious about your long stay."

All these questions the surgeon responded to pleasantly, for there was no more popular man in the fort than he was; but then came the question:

"What about Damar?"

"How do you mean?"

"Has he gone East?"

"He has."

"He took it pretty hard, didn't he, that we cut him?"

"I don't think he cared much at the loss of such friends as some of those proved who turned against him at the time they should have befriended him," was the sharp retort.

"You do not believe him guilty, then?" asked one, somewhat hotly.

"No, sir, and I will stand by him to the last."

"Call my name in the same roll, Surgeon Powell," put in Buffalo Bill.

"Appearances are against him, from all the letters we have had, and the marked papers sent us," said a captain.

"Don't judge by appearances always, gentlemen, or if we do let us judge ourselves, and how many of us can bear inspection," said Buffalo Bill.

"I tell you," he continued, in his frank way: "Duke Damar has some enemy in this fort who has fanned this flame against him until it burst forth into a hot fire."

"I have known him since he came on the border, a cadet fresh from West Point, and a pluckier man and truer friend I never knew, or wish to meet."

"He is not the man to do a mean act, let alone a criminal one, and those who have maligned him will regret it when he proves his innocence."

"By the great Rocky Mountains, I believe those who have talked most about him are those who are his debtors for money loaned and kind services rendered."

There was a dead silence when the scout ceased speaking, for there were several present who had been glad to see Duke Damar leave the fort in haste on account of certain loans they owed him.

"He certainly has warm friends in you, Cody, and in Powell," said a captain.

"Yes, I am no weather-cock to change with the wind, blow it good or bad, and I say again that that brave fellow, Damar, will yet prove that he has been cruelly wronged."

As most of those present had been the ones to act ungenerously toward Duke Damar, they cared not to hear such plain words, and so began to take their leave.

The majority of the officers, and the soldiers to a man almost, had not believed in the guilt of Damar, and had he not hastily departed from the fort he would have had many friends to stand up for him.

But he had unfortunately been brought in contact with the few who wished him out of the way, for the sake of promotion it may be, because they owed him money, or other reasons, and theirs was the influence that had been brought to bear upon the commander, which had caused him to feel that it was best for him to urge the young lieutenant to resign.

Those who had heard the plainly-spoken words of Buffalo Bill, with a few exceptions felt that they had been too hasty in their judgment of their brother officer; but that few were angered at what the scout had said.

At the fort Buffalo Bill was chief of scouts, and though he held no commissioned rank, he yet was the companion of the officers, from the commandant down.

He was liked and admired by all, and he was known to be devoid of all fear.

His name was known the world over, and his fame would go down to history as a man who had stood between civilization and savagery for years.

He was no man to get angry with, and so not one of those who felt his words keenly were willing to take them as a cause of quarrel.

"I've a notion to call that fellow out," said one young officer.

"Who, Damar?" asked a comrade.

"No, Buffalo Bill."

"What for?"

"Did you not hear how impertinently he spoke?"

"I heard all he said, Benson, but as the shoe did not fit me I did not put it on."

"It did not fit me either, but I should like to punish his insolence."

"Don't try it."

"Why?"

"Buffalo Bill is a dead shot, and his aim is said to be truest when he is in the greatest danger."

"He could not wield a sword."

"Don't deceive yourself, for he is an expert swordsman."

"The deuce he is! then I'll drop it."

"You had better," was the significant reply.

In the mean time, Buffalo Bill and Powell, after the departure of all the officers, sat talking together.

"Well, Frank, did you see my Double?" asked the scout, with a smile.

"No, but I heard of him."

"Ah!"

"Fact, and there's not a man who has seen him who does not believe that he saw you."

"Tell me of him."

"Well, I'll first tell you that we trailed a specter."

"A what?"

"A ghost."

"Nonsense."

"Well, old Lone Dick, the trapper, believes it is a ghost."

"Did you see him?"

"The ghost?"

"No, Lone Dick?"

"Yes."

"Well, what do you make out of him?"

"I do not know, for he is a queer one."

"So I think; but to your ghost."

"We went to the spot where Damar said he had met the Indian girl, and then we took the trail she turned him off of, and there, sure enough, found indications of an ambush."

"Then we returned and took the girl's trail and followed her up Lone Dick's canyon."

"To his cabin?"

"No, for she went past it; but we saw Lone Dick fishing on the banks of the stream and so stopped all night with him."

"He treated you well?"

"He did indeed; but when we asked him about the Indian girl, he said that a woman's 'spirit' had gone along, and all we could find out was that a woman in white had ridden by mounted upon a black horse."

"This is strange."

"Yes, but the trail we could only follow to a certain place the next day, and there we lost it."

"As good luck would have it, we struck the Overland Trail just in time to save the coach from being robbed, and in one of the passengers Damar recognized an old friend, a clever, handsome young artist who is out here making sketches."

"Then the road-agents are at work again on the Overland?"

"So it seems, Bill; but we stood them off, and went on to Hawk's Ranch, and there Damar took the coach on east, while I laid over a day or so to discover your Double."

"And you missed him?"

"I did; but on my way back here I was met at the same place where Damar was by the Indian girl, and she gave me the same warning."

"I took it, and when she left me felt convinced that she was not an Indian girl; but that is hard to prove."

"Then I flanked the ambushing party and got one, who was rigged up as a red-skin, killed their horses and set them afoot."

"Good!"

"Then I set off on the girl's trail, and it went up the canyon, and again I saw Lone Dick, and he said it was the specter, but on a white horse."

"I again lost the trail, so the next day started for the fort, determined to ask you, Bill, to go out with me as soon as you were able to do so."

"I will do so to-morrow, Frank, for I am as anxious as you are to solve the riddle as to who are the ambushers of the trail, who it is that has warned you and Damar, and particularly do I wish to meet this Double of mine."

"We will start to-morrow."

And on the next day Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell started on the trail.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TRAILING A SHADOW.

WITH only the knowledge of the commandant, Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell left the fort at dawn the following morning.

They went well prepared for what work might turn up before them, carrying an extra horse which they used as a pack-animal, and so well-trained he was that he kept his place close behind the others without having to be led.

Buffalo Bill looked pale and a little haggard, but expressed himself as just as good as ever.

The weapons of the two had been put in perfect trim, ample supplies taken along, and the two trailers were congratulating themselves upon starting out well, when behind them they heard the clatter of hoofs.

Looking back, they saw one of Buffalo Bill's scouts coming on rapidly and waving to them.

"What is it, Jack?" asked Cody, as the scout rode up.

"The assistant surgeon was taken very ill, sir, and the colonel says that you will have to come back, as Surgeon Powell cannot go now."

"This is too bad," said Surgeon Powell.

"But I must hasten back to Norcross, who doubtless has one of his severe attacks again."

"I will go on, Frank, and you can join me when you can get away at Hank's Ranch."

"Do you think you should go alone, when you do not feel as well as you might?"

"Oh, yes; for I can see what is going on and perhaps get some points by the time you arrive."

"Let me go with you, Cap'n Cody," said Mustang Jack, the scout, who was a wiry young fellow, clad in buckskin and had a face stamped with reckless deviltry.

He had lately come to the fort to serve as a scout, saying that he was from Texas, and he had made himself famous as a rider and shot while he was also known to have good qualities as a trailer and Indian-fighter.

"All right, Jack, go along, for I do not care to have Cody go alone," the surgeon said.

"As you please, then; but are you fixed for a tramp, Jack?"

"I'm allus ready for a fight or a journey, cap'n," was the reply.

The two friends then parted, Surgeon Powell returning at a gallop to the fort, while Buffalo Bill and Mustang Jack rode on toward Hank's Ranch.

Though he had had him under his command for several months, Buffalo Bill had never been able to find out much about the antecedents of the man accompanying him.

He had come to the fort one day with half a dozen fine mustangs to sell, and had readily gotten his price for them.

His story was that his brother and himself had a small pony ranch in Texas, and that he wished to turn scout, and as good men were needed Buffalo Bill had engaged him, and he had proved himself a valuable addition to the Buckskin Rovers, as Cody's men were called.

It was Cody's intention to go right on to Hank's Ranch and see if he could find his Double there, and then start alone, as though to return to the fort, that he might see if he had the same warning that Duke Damar and Frank Powell had had from the Indian girl.

He also wished to question Ribbon Moses and the other drivers on that part of the Overland, as to what they knew about the road-agents, and their force, for rumors had come in of late that the Knights of the Trail, as they were called had "held up" several coaches and robbed the passengers.

It was night when the chief of scouts and Mustang Jack reached the ranch, and the former was pretty well wearied with his ride, so sought his bed at once, for he had taxed himself severely for a man just recovering from a wound.

"Jack, you circulate around and see what you can pick up, but do not let any one know that I am here, and I have asked Hank not to speak of my coming," Buffalo Bill said, and he had ridden up to the rear of the ranch and gotten quarters in a cabin off from the main one.

The ranch tavern was a very pretentious structure for those parts, as it consisted of a large two-story log-house, with four sleeping rooms up-stairs, such as they were, and a bar, sitting-room, dining-room and kitchen downstairs.

On each side were wings of a single story, containing half a dozen small rooms in a row for guests.

There were out-houses, such as stables and several small dwelling-cabins scattered about.

A blacksmith shop, a small store and the stables and quarters for the Overland stage-horses and hands comprised Hank's Ranch, and

Jack he was anxious to have called "Hank's City."

But the drivers of the coaches were the only ones he could get to so call it, and great were the expectations raised in the hearts of passengers when told that Hank's City would be a good place to lay over and rest for a day or two, as it was a lovely place and the best of accommodations could be had there cheap.

The scenery thereabout was lovely, and the table was well kept, while the whisky was not the worst on the line; but the beds were hard and comfort was not to be had, so that Hank's City got many a cursing from disappointed travelers, while as for cheap accommodations, Hank was wont to get his "pound of flesh" for every pound of meat.

But Buffalo Bill, with the aid of his own traps, was made very comfortable, and arose in the morning greatly refreshed.

"Why, Bill, what did you come back for?" called out Landlord Hank, as he saw the scout come out of his cabin.

"Come back from where, Hank?"

"Did you walk back?"

"Back from where?"

"Up ther stage-trail."

"I have not been up the stage-trail."

"Bill, I hope yer wound hain't tarned yer head, but yer sart'inly bid me adoo awhile ago when yer tuk ther ole hearse fer ther eastward."

"Hank, I did not take the stage, and I have not left my cabin all night."

"Then it's yer ghost I see, or thet Double, fer yer come inter the bar last night, treated ther boys, and yer were at breakfast an hour ago, and tuk ther stage."

Buffalo Bill looked mystified.

"Where is Mustang Jack?"

"Yonder he comes."

"Did he see me, as you called the man you saw?"

"In course he did."

"Ho, Jack!"

The scout was already approaching from the stables, and quickened his steps.

"Jack, do you not know I did not leave my cabin last night?"

"You told me you did not intend to, cap'n, and I was surprised to see you do so."

"I did not leave my cabin."

"But you was in ther bar, cap'n, until high midnight."

"You saw me?"

"Certainly I seen yer, cap'n."

"Hank!"

"Well, Bill?"

"Who else saw me?"

"A number o' ther fellers."

"And all thought it was me?"

"Sart'in."

"The man slept here last night?"

"Of course."

"Where?"

"In your cabin, I supposed."

"He had breakfast here this morning?"

"You bet; nobody but a durned fool would miss one o' my breakfasts."

"And then took the stage eastward?"

"Yes."

"Who is the driver?"

"Ribbon Moses."

"Jack?"

"Yes, cap'n."

"Get your horse and mine, for we must overtake that stage."

"All right, cap'n; and you git breakfast, for I've had mine."

This Buffalo Bill did, and then mounting he and Mustang Jack set off at a rapid gallop to overtake the coach which had over an hour's start of them.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

RIBBON MOSES was a fast driver, and he had covered a dozen miles before the clattering of hoofs behind caused him to draw rein as he saw them, for he supposed they were trying to overtake the coach for some reason.

"Why, Bufler Bill, whar did yer git yer horse ter come on arter all?"

"Has yer changed yer mind?" called Ribbon Moses, as the two scouts dashed up.

"Mose, who have you as passengers?" called out Buffalo Bill, sternly, as he rode to the stage-window.

"Nary a pilgrim, Bill, as yer sh'ud know, havin' rid with me awhile."

"Did you have a passenger when you started out from Hank's?"

"On'y yersef, Bill."

"I was not with you, Ribbon Moses."

"Wal, what are ther little joke you is tryin' ter play on me, Bufler Bill?"

"None, for I was told that a man so like me as to be mistaken for me had gone away on the coach with you."

"And it were you, Bill."

"It was not."

"Lordy! is yer goin' ter die, Bill, that yer sperit are walkin' ther yarth afore yer is in yer grave ter give yer warnin' o' death?"

"Where is the man that came away from Hank's with you?"

"He got off ther box some six miles back, sayin' as how he'd left some important papers."

"I said I would drive back and make up time, being as you were a Government scout, but you, as I thought he were, said he would walk back and come by next coach, for he'd been wounded and were not very strong, and ther couple o' days' rest, until Overland Sam come along would help him."

"And it wasn't you, Bill?"

"It was not."

"Lordy!"

"Where did you leave this man, Ribbon Moses?"

"He got off ther hearse at Red Rock Spring."

"That is five miles from Hank's Ranch."

"Yas."

"We should have met him if he was returning to the Ranch."

"Sart'in."

"Well, Ribbon Moses, do me the favor not to speak to any one about this affair, and I'll see if I cannot find this twin or mine."

"He are yer Double fer sart'in, or—"

"Or what?"

"Yer sperit a-warnin' yer."

Buffalo Bill laughed, bade Ribbon Moses good-by, and turned back toward the ranch.

"Well, Jack, what do you think of that?" he asked as the two rode along together.

"I don't know what to think, cap'n."

"There is certainly some one impersonating me who is strangely like me."

"Sure, Pard Cap'n."

"Well, when we get within a quarter of a mile of Red Rock Spring I shall dismount and make a detour in the woods, while you after a wait of half an hour, ride slowly on to the Rock."

"Yas, cap'n."

This the scouts did, and Buffalo Bill approached the Red Rock Spring as cautiously as a tiger stealing upon its prey.

He reached the spring, but not a sign could he find there of a human being.

Then he waited for Mustang Jack to come up. But half an hour passed and the scout did not appear.

He waited longer, and growing impatient at the non-appearance of the scout he walked back down the trail to meet him.

He reached the spot where he had left him, but he was not there.

Searching the trail he saw that the two horses had stood there for awhile and then had been turned about and taken in the other direction.

He hastened on to a point where he could view the trail down the valley for a couple of miles.

But Mustang Jack and the horses were not in sight. What it meant the chief of scouts could not understand.

At last he said:

"Road-agents have jumped him, and I'll hasten on to the ranch, for I have a good horse there."

He referred to the animal he had used as a pack-horse, and which he had not brought with him in the pursuit of the stage-coach.

Back on the trail he went at a swinging pace, and in little more than an hour reached Hank's Ranch.

Hank was seated upon the rude piazza smoking a pipe and waiting for his dinner.

"Hello Bill, back ag'in and afoot?"

"Yes; but have you seen that shadow of mine?"

"Nary; didn't you catch up with the hearse?"

"Yes."

"He was in it."

"No, he left it, so Ribbon Moses said, to return here for some papers, and came back on foot from the Red Rock Spring."

"He has not tarned up, Bill; but I wish he would, fer I'd like ter see a circus, jist now, and that'd be one, as I sees you is that mad you is white."

"I am not in an angelic mood, Hank, for I've lost my horse and Mustang Jack."

"Where is Jack?"

"I left him before I got to Red Rock, to come on afoot and see if I could find this Double of mine, for I had not passed him on the road."

"Jack was to come on behind, but did not, and, going after him, I could not find him."

"Bill, things is gittin' mixed in these parts."

"They are, Hank."

"Waal, what is yer goin' ter do about it?"

"Get some dinner, mount my other horse and go in chase; but I'll have to get a saddle and bridle from you."

"Sart'in; but thar comes Jack now," and Hank pointed through the timber where Mustang Jack was visible.

He was mounted upon his own horse, and was leading Buffalo Bill's splendid animal, Black Chief.

"Jack, where on earth have you been," called out Buffalo Bill, as the scout approached.

"Round by the Valley Trail, of course, cap'n."

"Why did you go that way?"

"Because you told me to do so."

"I told you?"

"Yas, cap'n."

"I told you to await until I had time to get to the Red Rock and then come on."

"But you came back and told me ter go on ter Hank's by ther Valley Trail, while you'd walk, and so I went back to the trail and tuk it."

"You say that I came back and told you this, Jack?"

"Yas, cap'n; you hain't losin' yer mind, is yer?"

"Mustang Jack, did you see me?"

"In course I did."

"And you thought it was me?"

"Yas, it were you, cap'n."

"How did I look?"

"As yer does now."

"How was I dressed?"

"Jist as you is now."

"Long hair, gray sombrero and all?"

"Yas, cap'n."

"Mustang Jack, I told you no such thing—it was my Double."

"Ther devil!" cried Jack, in amazement, and Hank looked really frightened at what he heard.

"Well, Jack, we'll take two fresh horses after dinner and go back and see if we can strike the trail of this mysterious being."

And half an hour after the two scouts were again riding away in search of Buffalo Bill's Double.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE HAUNTED BOAT-HOUSE.

WHEN the storm swept over the Sound and caught Duke Damar and the three detectives in the little yacht there was considerable consternation felt ashore.

The storm had been seen coming up, and it was feared that Duke Damar would not reach the shore before it broke.

Other persons, dwellers at homes along the Sound, saw the adventurous young master of Sea Vale go out to sea almost in the face of the storm, and some then remarked that his conscience caused him to court death to end his mental sufferings, for they still believed him to be the murderer of his cousin, Delancy Redfield.

There were a few who saw him becalmed and the storm rising rapidly, and then they saw him lower and reef his sails.

As he did so a small cat-rig they beheld standing toward him, and that so frail a craft could stand the storm no one who saw it believed.

It was with greatest interest therefore that the people along the shore watched developments.

And especially did Regis Rossmore keep his eye upon the yacht.

Then he ran to the house and made known the situation.

There was a life-boat at Sea Vale, but the crew, the boatmen of the estate, would not venture forth in the face of that storm, though Regis Rossmore offered to go with them and said he would pay liberally for their services.

Mrs. Regis also urged them to make the attempt, but in vain.

"Who can be in that small boat, for they are doomed, though Duke, foolhardy boy that he is, may ride the storm out, for he is a splendid sailor," said Mrs. Regis.

"There are three men in the boat, Mrs. Regis, and they ran in here and asked for Duke, and I pointed him out to them."

"I told them a storm was brewing, but they went on in the face of it."

"What can they have wanted with Duke?"

"I do not know, for, of course, I did not ask their business; but,"—and he lowered his voice so that the servants should not hear him—"I am sure one is a detective, for I have seen him in an agency in Boston when my studio was broken into and I went to get men to trace the burglars."

"Indeed?" and Mrs. Regis's face wore a look of anxiety.

While the little cat-rig was yet some distance from the yacht, the gloom shut out both craft from view, and soon after the fury of the storm forced all but Regis Rossmore and the boatmen to go to the house for shelter.

But the young artist kept his place in the boat-house, enveloped in a storm-coat, and with Nick, the boatman, stood it out for several hours.

The light in the cupola of the boat-house was lighted by Nick, who also carried lanterns to each point of the cove and hung them on pikes, which he stuck in the sand.

"He should be able to find his way now, sir, into the cove, for he has done it the darkest nights without a light ashore," Nick said to the artist.

It was late when, worn out at last, Regis Rossmore and Nick turned to the house, for the latter said:

"The yacht's run up the coast, sir, to some other port, or gone under, or she'd have been in before this, Master Rossmore."

"Well, Nick, we have done all that we could do," was the sad reply, and the artist went into the mansion to make known to Mrs. Regis that there was some hope that Damar had run to another harborage.

Then he ate his supper and retired.

But Nick could not sleep, with the winds howling about his little cottage on the hillside, and said:

"I thought I was tired, wife, when I went to bed; but I'll have to get up, for Master Duke may come in, and he'll be worn out and no one to help him, and he'll be used up after the struggle he's had."

"And are you going back to the boat-house, Nick?" asked the good woman.

"Yes, wife."

"It's a hard night, but I'm glad to hear you say so."

"Put on your warmest clothes, and your oil-cloth coat and rubber boots will keep you dry."

"Maybe you'd better put a flask o' spirits in your pocket, for it will help Master Duke, and keep you from catching cold."

Nick considered the advice good, and promptly followed it.

Dressing in his warmest clothes, he left the house looking like an Esquimaux, and carrying a lantern with him.

He crossed the meadow, reached the road and was soon at the boat-house, which was a handsome structure, with a cupola on top in which was a large light, which was used when sailing parties were out on the Sound at night.

The sides of the boat-house were open, but in the center was an octagonal room which was a comfortable retreat, and where oars, sails and boating implements were kept, as well as easy-chairs for those who cared to sit in the boat-house and enjoy the afternoon breezes.

As he reached the house he placed the lantern in the room and then glanced out over the waters.

The wind was blowing a gale, and the waters roared ominously as they fell in huge waves upon the beach.

Suddenly he started, and from his lips came the cry:

"The lights on the points of the cove are out."

Hastily he ran around to one of the points.

There was the lantern swinging on the pike; but it was out.

"I never thought the wind could blow this out," he muttered, and he relighted it.

Then he walked around to the other point and lighted the lantern there.

As he turned toward the boat-house he noticed that the light there had also gone out.

He could not understand it, and quickened his steps.

Up the winding stairs he went to the cupola and relighted the lantern there.

Then he returned to the room and kept a watch out over the waters.

But his eyes grew weary and at last he sunk back in an easy-chair and slept.

How long he was asleep he did not know; but he awoke with a start.

He was certain that he felt the presence of some one, was sure that a human being had been in the room with him.

His lantern was out, and all was darkness. Without the gale still blew, the waves still ran high.

"Who is here?" he cried.

No answer came, and then Nick said:

"I dreamed it, that was all."

"But how did the lantern go out?"

"Ah! it was not filled."

He lighted a match and found that the lantern was full of oil.

Then he glanced from the window.

The two points were dark—the lights were out.

Hastily he ran up the stairs to the cupola.

The light from them no longer flamed across the waters as a beacon to guide the sailor to a haven.

The light had gone out.

"My God! the place is haunted," cried Nick and he fled like a deer from the boat-house.

His wife sprung out of bed at his sudden entrance, and when she had heard his story and the words:

"The boat-house is haunted, wife," she said, impressively:

"It's Master Delancy's spirit, Nick, haunting the place and putting out the beacons to keep Master Duke from coming safe home."

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! Nick, can it be after all our trust Master Duke did kill his cousin?"

Nick made no reply. His thoughts were busy, but he dared not go to sleep again, and, as it was nearly dawn, he and his wife sat before a cheerful fire, cheering themselves up with a glass of spirits different from those that are said to roam about graveyards.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LOST HEIR.

THE morning dawned gloomy and bleak. The wind still blew hard, and the war of the waves came with sullen sound to the ears of those in Sea Vale Hall.

Early had messengers come from the neighboring houses along the shores to know if Duke Damar had returned in safety, for many believed that he had been lost.

Then Mrs. Regis and the artist met at breakfast, and the faces of both were pale and sad.

"I fear that poor Duke is lost, Mrs. Regis," the artist had said.

"There is no news then of him?"

"None; but Nick, the boatman, came to my room while I was dressing and said that the lights had been twice put out, on the points of the cove and in the boat-house."

"The wind blew them out."

"He thinks not."

"What then?"

"He says that he went to sleep in the octagonal room, and awoke feeling that some one was there with him."

"His own lantern had gone out, and looking from the window, he saw that the point lights had also."

"Then he went up to the cupola and saw all was dark there, so he fled to his cottage, feeling sure that it was Delancy Redfield's ghost putting the lights out to prevent Duke from running in."

"Nonsense! Nick is an old fool."

"So I told him; but he thoroughly believes that the ghost of Delancy Redfield was abroad last night."

Mrs. Regis looked pale and anxious.

Her nerves were under a strain, and so she said:

"Regis, go and find out the worst and let us end this suspense or I shall be ill."

The artist left the house, and accompanied by Nick and several of the servants, went along the beach.

He had not far to go to find a clew to the fate of the master of Sea Vale.

There, upon a point of rocks, was the yacht, dismantled and her hull crushed.

Upon the stern, as an irony of fate, appeared her name in gilt letters:

"Hope."

"My God! he is lost," cried Regis Rossmore, and he plunged in, all dressed as he was, and made his way through the breakers to the rocky ledge.

"No one is on board," he called back, as he clambered upon the deck.

Soon he returned and told how the hull was shattered, the little cabin in wild disorder, and that the carved tiller was gone also.

"The boat looks as though she had been on her beam-ends and was thus cast upon the ledge," he said.

"And Master Duke?" asked Nick.

"Is lost beyond all doubt."

"I will go and break the news to his aunt, while you divide, men, and search up and down the coast for his body."

Mrs. Regis was quite broken down by the sad news, and left all that was to be done to the artist.

Nellie was telegraphed for, and a telegram was also sent to Lawyer Vance Hilton asking his immediate presence at Sea Vale.

The search of the shores was kept up all day, and no trace of the little cat-boat could be found; but several bodies had been discovered, but whether those of the men in the boat no one knew.

Regis Rossmore went to take a look at them and gave it as his opinion that they were not the men that he had seen in the little cat-rigged boat.

"The wind changed and blew out of the Sound, so the bodies would have been driven out to sea," an old sailor said.

Nellie Regis came home white-faced and sad, and Lawyer Hilton also put in an appearance.

Rossmore was untiring in his efforts to find the body of Sea Vale's master, and securing a tugboat went up and down the coast for days.

The disaster caused by the storm he found to be great, for a number of vessels had been wrecked, and many bodies had been found; but none of them proved to be that of Duke Damar.

And at last he gave it up and returned to Sea Vale.

Nellie met him with tearful eyes and said:

"Is there no hope?"

"None."

"You have been so good, and I thank you; but I wish you could give me some hope that he is not lost."

"For ten days, Miss Nellie, I have made every effort to find him or his body."

"The yacht tells what his fate has been."

"Poor, poor Cousin Duke," said Nellie.

"Could it have been a judgment upon him, for—"

"Mother, do not accuse a dead man!" said Nellie, sharply, and Mrs. Regis flinched under the cut.

"Miss Nellie, you know that by the death of your cousin, Duke Damar, you become the mistress of Sea Vale estate, along with the property belonging to him, and which he had from the death of his cousin, Delancy," said Mr. Hilton.

"I do not care to discuss what my fortune will be, Mr. Hilton, until a more fitting season," was the response.

"But I am anxious to return to the city, and—"

"Return then, sir."

"Nellie!" exclaimed Mrs. Regis, reprovingly.

"Mother, I will not stand dictation in this matter even from you."

"It is not certain that Cousin Damar is dead, for he may have been picked up by some outward bound vessel."

"There is no hurry about his fortune's coming to me, and I will not have it given into my possession until six months have passed away."

"Then, if Cousin Duke does not appear, and God grant he may, Mr. Hilton can come down and make all legal arrangements."

"I suppose that I can take his papers in the mean time to look them over against—"

"No, Lawyer Hilton, not a paper shall be touched, and all letters coming for Duke shall be left with the seal unbroken."

"I shall not believe him dead until time enough has passed to hear from him from every port in the world."

"I think you presume, Nellie, to dictate to Lawyer Hilton."

"If Lawyer Hilton does not like my acting as I deem right, I can place my legal matters in other hands."

"Oh, I am perfectly satisfied, Miss Nellie, and with you deem it best to wait."

"But I feel sure that Mr. Damar is dead, and so spoke in your interest," quickly said the lawyer, who did not care to give up the rich plum he had in hand as attorney for the millionaire's heirs.

"Well, we will wait, and I shall instruct the postmaster at the village to keep all letters coming for my cousin in his hands until called for by Duke or myself."

"Now let us drop this subject of fortune, and try and show proper respect for the dead, if dead Cousin Duke is."

Mrs. Regis was amazed at the spirit shown by her daughter.

She had an ambition, now that she believed Duke Damar dead, to have Nellie reign as mistress of Sea Vale and the wealthiest young lady in the land, and it would have been like Balm of Gilead to her grief for Duke Damar's death, could her daughter have at once become the head of all of Delancy Damar's grand estate.

But Nellie would be obeyed, and she and Lawyer Hilton had to yield as gracefully as they could.

As for Regis Rossmore, he seemed surprised at Nellie's manner and firmness, and said:

"She has a will of her own, that is certain."

"I am glad I know in time that she cannot be driven, for I shall make no mistake."

The next day Nellie returned to her boarding-school, and Lawyer Hilton was her escort, while Regis Rossmore went back to his studio in the city, leaving Mrs. Regis alone in the grand old home.

The neighbors were most kind in their visits and sympathy; but many there were who said that the death of Duke Damar was a judgment from Heaven upon him for his crime.

One day Mrs. Regis received a letter in an unknown hand.

Breaking the seal, she read:

"THE RETREAT."

"Thursday."

"Will Mrs. Regis kindly write me full particulars regarding the supposed death of Mr. Duke Damar, a notice of which I gleaned from the papers yesterday, and greatly oblige one who was his friend."

"MAY MALCOLM."

"Who is May Malcolm, I wonder?" cogitated the lady, after reading the letter.

"She writes like a lady, surely."

"I wonder if she can be a member of that wealthy Malcolm family who live near M—?"

"Yes, for her letter has the post-office address of M—."

"What can Duke have been to her, I wonder?"

"Well, I will so word my answer as to try and get a reply, and then I may find out."

"My heavens! suppose that Duke were secretly married?"

"In that case my poor Nellie would not be the heir," and Mrs. Regis looked positively frightened at the thought.

The next day she answered the letter, giving the full particulars of Duke's loss, and worded her letter ingeniously so as to get an answer.

But no reply came, and Mrs. Regis remained worried at the thought that Duke Damar might have been secretly married.

Soon after she received a letter from Regis Rossmore telling her that he would be compelled to go West for some little time, as matters had not gone there to suit him of late.

He also stated that he would be away an indefinite time, but would let her hear from him.

"Well, Nellie will soon be at home, and the six months which she set as the time she would wait, will not be very long in passing," she said.

Some weeks after Nellie came home from boarding-school, having ended her school days forever.

Some of the sunshine had gone from her face, but she was if anything more beautiful than before, and her mother said to herself, when she gazed upon her:

"When she puts off mourning and wears colors, no one more beautiful can be found, and

she and Regis Rossmore will make a splendid-looking couple."

The day after Nellie's arrival, Mrs. Regis received a registered letter, and when she had broken it open the contents seemed to annoy her greatly, while when Nellie entered the room she hastily threw it out of sight.

The letter was from Regis Rossmore.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MYSTIFIED.

WHEN Buffalo Bill and Mustang Jack rode away from Hank's Ranch, the chief of scouts' face was set with a resolution to discover the man who had so persistently and well represented him.

He went straight to the Red Rock Spring, where Mustang Jack showed him that he had seen his Double.

Dismounting the scout walked all about him and discovered that there was a slight trail visible.

This he followed from the side of the stage-trail down the hill into the timber.

Mustang Jack followed with the horses, and a short distance further on the scout came to where a horse had been left standing for some time.

"Now we have a clew, Jack," said Buffalo Bill cheerily, and mounting his horse he still followed the trail, the hoof-marks of the animal he tracked being easily seen.

For several miles this trail was followed, and Mustang Jack several times complimented his chief upon his skill in trailing, for at times he lost it altogether.

But Buffalo Bill seemed never at fault.

He kept steadily on until the trail turned into a sandy bottom and then entered a small stream.

On the other side there was no trail visible, so that it was certain that the horseman had turned either up or down the stream.

The water ran rapidly, and a hoof-mark was almost at once washed out.

"Jack."

"Yes, cap'n."

"If that man had intended to go up the stream, he would have bent in that direction before he reached this point."

"You read signs like a book, cap'n."

"But then he might have thought that he would be tracked, and this trick suspected and so done so purposely to throw us off our guard."

"It might be."

"Now you go up the stream some three miles, cross and come down on the other side."

"I will go down the stream an equal distance and return here to meet you."

"Yes, cap'n," and Mustang Jack set off on his way up the stream, while Buffalo Bill did the same down the bank of the brook.

Buffalo Bill held on for a mile or so, when he came to a halt.

There was a fall in the bed of the stream over which no horse could pass.

Then he went to the shore, and dismounting, carefully examined the bank.

"No horse has gone ashore on this side, that is certain," he said, after a close examination.

Then he looked at the other bank.

There were tracks there and he followed them.

They were very faint, in the grass which abounded on that side, and it was not until they struck some soft earth that he saw there were two trails, one going, the other coming, and that they were *bear tracks*.

This fact the grass had not revealed, and the scout had not examined closely, feeling sure they were the trail of the horseman he was in search of.

With a muttered imprecation he set off up the stream again, muttering:

"I went in the wrong direction, for Jack is on the right trail."

Upon coming in sight of the spot where he had left the scout, he saw Mustang Jack seated upon his horse.

At sight of him Jack started, and as he drew nearer, he called out:

"Lordy, cap'n, but I has made a big mistake."

The scout was excited, and Bill asked quickly:

"Well, what is it, Jack?"

"Pard Cap'n, thar are a fall a leetle above here thet I c'u'd not git over, and thar were no tracks on either side, so I returns at once to wait fer you."

"I hadn't been here long when I seen you, as I s'posed it were, a-coming from over yonder on horseback."

"I seen yer come riding along brisk, and I lay out to tell yer I hedn't diskivered nothin', when *you*, as I thought it were, called out:

"Pard Jack, you wait here, for I'll be back soon."

"Yer crossed ther stream right thar, for thar is ther tracks o' yer horse, and went back on ther trail we come."

"When I seen yer jist now a-comin' up ther stream I were thet skeert I a'most fell off my horse, for now I knows it were not you, but your Double."

"And what kind of a horse did this man ride?"

"For all the world like the one you is ridin', cap'n."

"And he went back toward the Overland Trail?"

"Yes, cap'n."

Buffalo Bill's face was pale now, and his lips firmly set.

The devil in him was aroused.

Springing to the ground he took a long and searching look at the tracks of his Double's horse.

Then he mounted and set off at a swift gallop on the strange horseman's trail, while Mustang Jack followed closely in his rear.

After a ride of a mile the trail was no longer visible.

Buffalo Bill halted, closely examined the grass about him and said:

"He put the mufflers upon the hoofs of his horse here, and then tried to hide his trail; but he went on the same way as before, as I can see a faint trace here and there."

"You is true boss fer trailin', cap'n," said Mustang Jack admiringly, and after a short distance a place in some soft earth that looked like an elephant's track, showed him that the scout was correct.

"There is where his horse stumbled and put his muffled hoof in that soft earth before he could step across the gully."

"That's so for a fact, cap'n."

Mounting his horse once more Buffalo Bill pressed on rapidly to where the tracks struck the Overland trail.

There were visible the muffled hoof-tracks, but just after they entered the trail a large head of elk must have swept along and all trace was destroyed.

"Fortune favors him, Jack, for he took the mufflers off his horse here, and these elk-tracks destroy all trace, and it is getting too dark to see the trail now."

"Come, we will go to the ranch," and they set off at a gallop.

Dashing up to Hank's they were greeted with an expression more energetic than elegant from the station-keeper, who called out:

"Buffalo Bill, didn't you ride up the trail half an hour ago?"

"I did not."

"Didn't you get a drink and a cigar and tell me that Jack was coming along behind, and to tell him you had gone up the trail?"

"I did not."

"Lord save us, then it was *your Double*."

Something like an oath passed between the lips of Buffalo Bill as he heard this.

But it was night and to follow would be time thrown away, so he dismounted and went to his cabin, now thoroughly convinced that he did have a Double in life.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE THIRD WARNING.

THE Double of Buffalo Bill did not visit Hank's Ranch that night, and it was well for him that he did not, for the chief of scouts had paid three of the stable-boys to stand watch for him and come and report if his second self appeared.

Buffalo Bill was up early and had breakfast, after which he and Jack struck off once more on the trail of the Double.

It was the same hoof-track which Bill had studied upon the banks of the little stream the night before.

But the west-bound coach had passed in the night, and there were a number of deer and other tracks on the trail which obliterated those of the horseman he followed, and he concluded to give it up for the present.

"Mustang Jack, you remain at the ranch for a week, and keep as much out of sight as possible."

"I will go on a separate trail, and return in several days."

"Should you see this mysterious Double of mine, boldly ask him who he is and tell him that I am on his trail worse than a wolf, and wish to meet him."

"Now, mind you, I will not be back at the ranch for three days, so any one who looks like me that comes before that time is my Double, so try and detain him until my arrival."

"I'll do it, cap'n," and Mustang Jack returned to the ranch, glad of a respite of a few days, where he could get whisky, cigars and good fare at the expense of his chief.

But Buffalo Bill did not stop at the ranch longer than to get a haversack of provisions and his camping outfit.

Then he set off on the trail to the fort, having given Mustang Jack a hint that he was going to look up Surgeon Powell.

He was riding slowly along the trail when suddenly he drew rein.

Black Chief pricked up his ears, for there was some one ahead.

"The Indian girl, as I live!"

"Now to see what I can discover," said the scout, and he rode slowly on.

The Indian girl was mounted upon her white

horse this time, and she had been riding along the trail, halting with evident surprise when she caught sight of the scout.

As he approached she regarded him fixedly, and drew rein ere he was within fifty feet of her.

"Are you the great scout chief, Buffalo Bill?" she asked, as he halted close to her.

"I am called Buffalo Bill."

"You are the Red Rose?" he replied.

"How does the chief know?" she asked with surprise.

"The Sioux can have but one maiden in their tribe so beautiful, and you must be the Red Rose."

He spoke in the Sioux tongue, which he could converse in most readily, and the maiden shook her head impatiently, and said:

"The Red Rose speaks English; let us talk in the language of the pale-faces."

"As the Red Rose pleases, but she is far from the homes of her people."

She seemed not to know what to say to this at first, but, after hesitating, said:

"Some of our braves are hunting not far away, and the Red Rose wanders about alone because it pleases her."

"This is a dangerous hunting-ground for Sioux braves, for they are at war with the pale-faces."

"The Sioux are not on the war-path."

"They hunt game for their people."

"Where are they?"

"They are in the trail that the white chief follows, so let him turn aside or he will meet death."

"Did the Red Rose not say that the Sioux braves were not on the war-path, but were hunting?"

The maiden seemed surprised at this direct question, and looked confused.

Then she answered:

"The white chief is the foe of the Sioux, and he has taken the scalps of many of their braves."

"Did he meet a Sioux warrior, would he not kill him?"

"Did the Sioux braves meet the white chief, would they not kill him?"

Buffalo Bill was compelled to admit that this reasoning was good, as carried out by past acts on his part and that of the red-skins, too.

"Then I must turn from my trail?"

"Yes."

"Why does the Red Rose prove my friend, when her people are my foes?"

"The Red Rose is the friend of the pale-faces."

"Ah! and where would she bid me go?"

"The white chief is on the trail to the fort?"

"Yes."

"Let him go by the northern trail."

"The Sioux are on this trail?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the valley beyond."

"Many of them?"

"Oh! so many."

"But they mean no harm?"

"No."

"Where goes the Red Rose?"

"Back to her people."

"I will heed the warning of the Red Rose and go by the lower trail."

"The heart of the Red Rose is glad," and the Indian girl waved her hand and wheeling her horse went back the way she had come, while Buffalo Bill traveled off to the left as though to make a wide *détour*.

He did go as far as the lower trail, which bore away to the left, and held on it for several miles until he came to a valley.

Up this valley he went, leaving the trail directly behind him.

A ride of several miles brought him to a point from which he could see far before him up the valley.

Not a red-skin was in sight, and he saw several herds of deer feeding a long way off.

"That pretty red-skin lied to me," he said, aloud.

"There is not a red-skin in this valley, or any this side of the mountain range, unless he's a scout, and I half felt so when she told me what she did."

"She had some motive in doing so, and it was to warn me of some danger that lay in my way on that other trail."

"Ha! there she goes now on her way back, and the cunning girl went on the trail she was following, after making me believe she had turned back."

"Now I'll go and see just where she went."

The Indian girl was nearly a mile from where the scout stood, and he being in a clump of trees could not be seen by her.

She was going along at a canter, and soon disappeared over the hills on the other side of the valley.

Then Buffalo Bill went back, and mounting his horse, rode up to the trail and turned into it.

He followed it at a gallop back toward Hank's Ranch, and soon came in sight of the place where he had met the girl; but there the trail turned off toward a thicket.

This he approached warily, for he did not know what he would find there.

But entering the timber he found no one there; but the ground plainly showed two trails.

One was the Indian girl's, leading in and out of the timber.

The other was a trail left by half a dozen horses, and they came from the mountains.

"These horses were shod, so they were not red-skins."

"I'll see how they left here."

"Ah! as I thought, they go away in a bunch, so the riders were white men, for Indians would have ridden off in single file."

"Now who are they?"

"Who could they have been but Knights of the Overland?"

That girl came here to meet them, and she saw me before they came, so sent me off on the lower trail to keep me from riding upon them that is certain. As I do not care to run upon a camp of six to one, I'll follow her and see if I cannot discover her camp.

"If I can I'll send Jack to the fort after Surgeon Powell and a score of my men, and I think we can track these road-agents to earth."

"Now to follow the girl, and she is no more Indian than I am."

With this Buffalo Bill started once more upon the trail toward the fort, but resolved to stick to his determination to hunt the hiding-place of the girl who had warned him of danger.

"It is her third warning too, for she kept Damar and Powell also from riding into ambush."

"Who is she?"

"That is the question that puzzles me."

CHAPTER XXXV.

LONE DICK SEES DOUBLE.

LONE DICK the trapper was a good liver. He never slighted his meals, and in his way he was considerable of an epicure.

He had not a lazy bone in his body, and was wont to keep his larder well supplied by hunting and fishing.

Then too he had his grizzly to feed and that animal, as Lone Dick expressed it: "Was a werry big feeder."

Then there were the wolves who were always hungry.

But game of all kinds was in abundance.

It was but a short distance to where buffalo could be found, and elk, deer and feathered game could be had for the shooting.

If Lone Dick wanted a rabbit-pie he had but to knock over the game, for they were plentiful.

If he preferred boiled squirrel, they were in the trees that grew on the sides of the canyon.

There were quail, wild pigeons, and the stream was full of delicious fish.

He had planted a garden plot in the bottom, and ingeniously fenced it in so that nothing could get in to destroy his vegetables; and potatoes, onions, cabbages, turnips and corn, Lone Dick had to his stomach's content.

So it was that the old trapper was happy, and he laid away in the fall a liberal supply for winter.

One afternoon Lone Dick was seated at his favorite place on the banks of a stream fishing.

He had two lines in the water.

Not that he was in a hurry, for he had plenty of time; but he liked the sport of watching two corks at the same time.

Suddenly he heard hoof-falls, and he glared down the canyon.

There he beheld a snow-white mustang, with flowing mane and tail coming slowly up the canyon.

But upon the back of the animal there was a rider.

That rider was a woman and she was clad in white.

In other words, over her head was a cowl of white, and a snowy robe enveloped her form completely, falling almost to the feet of her horse.

She passed along up the canyon, waving one hand in a weird kind of way to Lone Dick.

The salute was returned by the trapper with a wave of the hand and in silence.

That was all that passed between them, and the specter went on up the canyon out of sight.

Just then Lone Dick caught a large fish, and he had it out on the bank in a jiffy, seeming to forget all about the specter of the canyon in the tempting supper he had on the end of his hook.

It was a large fish, but Lone Dick either thought that it was not enough for a meal for a hungry man, or he was looking out for his breakfast also, for he again threw in the line and waited.

He did not catch another for some little time, and then both corks bobbed under simultaneously.

Lone Dick was a sportsman, and he sprung quickly to his lines.

One fish was landed, then the other, and he was taking them off of the hooks when he was startled by a roar from the grizzly up on the rocks.

He knew that his brute sentinel was on the alert, and the roar was a note of warning.

He glanced up the canyon.

No one was visible.

He looked down the canyon and sprung for his rifle.

There was a horseman in sight and already quite near.

A second look showed him that there was nothing to fear, for he stood looking at the approach of the horseman with perfect indifference.

"Hello, Lone Dick, how are you?" cried the horseman as he drew near.

"I'm a-stirrin' Bufler Bill, as yer sees; but I heer'd you hed been laid up fer repairs," answered the trapper.

"Yes, I was wounded, but am all right again, and on the trail, as you see."

"Who is yer trailing, pard?"

"Anybody that is abroad for mischief."

"Seen anybody in these parts of late?"

"None but ther Specter of ther Canyon."

"When did she pass?"

"Not half a hour ago."

"All right."

"Good-by, old man."

"Bufler Bill, yer knows it are bad luck to track that woman-sperit?"

"So I've heard."

"And is yer goin' ter trail her?"

"Yes."

"Waal, take a fool's advice and don't do it."

Buffalo Bill laughed and said:

"Lone Dick, I have a good joke on you."

"What are it?"

"I'll tell you the next time I see you," and with a laugh the horseman rode on up the canyon at a gallop.

Lone Dick watched him until he was out of sight, and then shook his head in a significant kind of manner.

Then he rolled up his lines and hung them on the tree, took up his string of fish and was about to depart when old grizzly gave another roar of warning.

"What's up now?" muttered Lone Dick, and he glanced down the canyon.

What he saw caused him to start, strong as were his nerves.

"By ther Smoky Mountains!" came from his lips, in amazement.

"Lordy! ef thet hain't ther ghost o' Bufler Bill, I'll chaw gum fer food all ther rest o' my nat'ral life."

His eyes were upon a horseman coming up the canyon, and now not a hundred feet from him.

He sidled away toward the path leading up to his cabin, and he carried his gun in hand ready for use, and yet he did not seem to wish to use it.

"Hold on, Lone Dick, for do you not know me?"

"Waal, I thought I did; but I'm durned ef I knows which is which and you from t'other."

"I am Buffalo Bill, and we have met several times before, old man."

"So t'other said."

"What ther?"

"Ther one I seen a leetle while ago."

"Then you saw a man that resembled me?"

"I seen a man what you resembles," was the cautious reply of the old trapper.

"You mistook him for me?"

"I took him for Buffalo Bill."

"I am Buffalo Bill."

"Waal, he looked it."

"Don't I also?"

"You does."

"Have you seen any one else?"

"Ther sperit."

"What sperit?"

"Ther dead woman as they calls ther Specter o' ther Canyon."

"Where is she?"

"Gone yonder," and he pointed up the canyon.

"And this man whom you took for me?"

"Went on her trail, though I told him it were bad luck."

"Well, I'll go, too."

"Yer knows best."

"How far is this Specter ahead?"

"About two miles, I gueses."

"Is she an Indian?"

"No, she are white."

"How dressed?"

"In a shroud."

"And the man?"

"Is a mile behind her."

"All right, Lone Dick, I may return and claim your hospitality to-night if I do not overtake them."

"And if you does?"

"I do not know just what will happen," was the reply, and as the horseman rode on, Lone Dick muttered to himself:

"Thar is goin' ter be a circus, that's sart'in, when them two meets; but which are Bufler Bill and which hain't, I'm durned ef I knows."

"Pears ter me thet thet man behind looked mad, and I'm guesin' he are ther scout; but fer looks, size, clothes, horses and outfit they is as much alike as them Si-mese twins I seen long ago."

"Waal, this hain't my funeral, so let 'em

fight it out to please themselves," and Lone Dick, the trapper, went on up to his cabin, evidently impressed by what he had seen.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A SURPRISE.

WHEN May Malcolm received the letter from Mrs. Regis, in answer to her own, she read it over and over again.

She had kept from her father the paper containing the notice of Duke Damar's having been lost at sea, or rather she had not read it to him, for one of her duties was to read to him the papers.

She had skipped the story of the storm and loss of the yacht, as there was also a story of the crime of which he was suspected, and it was hinted that remorse had tempted him to thus end his own life.

To know all, she had written to Mrs. Regis.

Her reply was not wholly satisfactory to May Malcolm.

She wished to know more, and she determined to do so.

So one day she asked her father and uncle if they could spare her for a visit to a friend.

Of course they could, but they would greatly miss her.

How long would she be gone?

"Only for a few days," was the reply, and to make her work good she got off of the train and passed a night at her friends' home.

Then she went on to the village near Sea Vale, and there got a carriage to drive out to the Damar estate.

Arriving at the Hall she asked if Mrs. Regis was at home.

She was not, for the lady had gone driving.

"But Miss Regis is at home," said the butler.

"Take my card to her, please."

She was ushered into the grand parlors and glanced about her with admiration at their beauty.

She was accustomed to an elegant house and refined surroundings, but nothing so superb as she now beheld had ever before come under her observation.

Over the mantle in the front parlor hung a painting, and she started as she looked at it.

It was a large painting, and the figures in it were portraits.

She beheld a six-horse stage-coach on a mountain road in the far West.

The driver was on the box, his horses reined to a halt and he was a perfect type of the Overland prince of the ribbons.

About the stage were several armed men wearing masks, and out of the window gazed two men.

One was the dark face of a young and handsome man, the other of an elderly man.

"It is Uncle Roger," said May.

There were other figures in the painting, two horsemen, gallant, dashing men in uniform, riding full speed upon the road-agents and firing as they came.

One of the officers wore his hair long, falling upon his shoulders.

The other was Duke Damar and a splendid likeness.

The tears came into the eyes of May Malcolm as she gazed on the face of the young soldier.

Then she beheld another face.

It was painted upon the door of the stage-coach.

"It is my own portrait," she said aloud, and in utter amazement.

The rustle of a dress in the hall caused her to turn and she was face to face with Nellie Regis.

"Miss Malcolm, I believe?"

"Am I so remiss as not to remember where we have met before, for your face is most familiar?"

"Be seated, please."

"We have never met, Miss Regis; but I came to see your mother, with whom I corresponded regarding a very dear friend, and as she was away from home I asked to see you."

"Can I serve you in any way, Miss Malcolm, though I do not remember my mother speaking of her correspondence with you?"

"I wrote to ask in regard to the fate of Mr. Damar, who I believe was your cousin."

"Yes, an adopted brother, one whom I most dearly loved, and his sad fate was a cruel blow to me."

"Did you know him?"

"Yes, for he visited our home."

"Did he never speak of us?"

"No, though I have seen very little of Duke of late years, as he was away in the army."

"Then I will tell you of the interest my father, my uncle and myself hold in him, as he was too modest to speak of his own brave deeds, and I have come, Miss Regis, to learn all about his sad end, or if there is any ray of hope that he may not be dead?"

"I am one to hope against hope, Miss Malcolm, and I refused to accept the property coming to me through Duke's death, until I am sure that he is dead."

"Let me tell you that he spoke to me of you often, that he told me of the sad death of his cousin, and how he rested under a cruel suspi-

cion, and but for you would have gone to the gallows."

"I merely did my duty," said Nellie Regis in a low tone.

"Let me tell you now how we met him," and May went on to tell the story of the storm which drove Duke Damar to seek shelter at The Retreat, the midnight robbery and murder, and all else that had occurred.

Then she told of his meeting her uncle cut on the frontier and saving his life, and looking up at the painting she continued:

"And that is a portrait of the very scene, as my uncle has described it, Miss Regis."

"Ah! now I see why I supposed that I had met you before, for the picture in the door-panel is your likeness, Miss Malcolm."

"Yes; but who was the artist?"

"A Mr. Regis Rossmore, a friend of my mother."

"He was visiting Sea Vale, and poor Duke gave him the subject for a painting, with the likenesses, your portrait to be placed upon the panel."

"It was to be presented, so Mr. Rossmore stated my cousin said, to a lady friend, and not knowing her name the painting, just completed, was placed here; but permit me, Miss Malcolm, to ask you to accept it, for Mr. Rossmore gave it to me, and I will have it boxed up and forwarded to your address."

"Oh, Miss Regis, you are too kind!"

"But above all things would I prize the painting, for it is a portrait of Mr. Damar, and also of my uncle."

"And the face of the young man looking from the stage window is that of the artist."

"What a striking face!"

"It is, and Mr. Rossmore is quite a remarkable man."

"But, Miss Malcolm, may I ask if you are a relative of Lieutenant Andrew Malcolm, of the Revenue Service?"

"He is my brother, Miss Regis."

"Do you know him?" cried May.

"Your brother?"

"No, let me say my cousin, and adopted brother; but never having looked upon him as other than a brother, I so speak of him and regard him."

"I remember now that he spoke of having a sister May, who lived at his home, The Retreat."

"Yes, and my uncle, the one in the painting there, is now living with us, and there it was that your cousin visited us; but you know my brother Andrew, then?"

"Know him? I owe to him my life," said Nellie Regis, earnestly.

"Why, Miss Regis, you amaze me, for Andrew never spoke of you."

"It was not very long ago."

"Ah! and I have not seen him for some little time."

"Tell me of it, I beg of you."

Nellie was only too glad to do so, and Andrew Malcolm lost nothing in the telling from her lips, for she certainly made him a hero.

"Brave, noble Andrew!"

"How glad I am that he was able to rescue you, Miss Regis."

"This is another bond to make us friends."

"And friends we will be, I know, the best of friends," and rising, Nellie kissed May Malcolm in an impulsive way that deeply touched her.

"I must tell you a secret, Miss Regis, and that is, that I came away from home under false colors, for father and uncle believe me to be visiting a friend of my school-days."

"I did go there and spend the night, and I shall stop again on my return home; but my motive was to come here, and really I wished to see you, as a paper I read said that you still held the hope that Mr. Damar was not dead, but had been picked up by some outward-bound vessel, perhaps going to a port in Africa, India, or to Australia."

Strange as many believe it, I do still hold belief that Duke is not dead, and I cannot get the idea out of my mind against all seeming proof to the contrary—Well, Burns?" and Nellie turned to a servant who announced:

"Lieutenant Malcolm!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PLAYING WITH FIRE.

THE entrance of Lieutenant Andrew Malcolm into the parlors of Sea Vale Hall was a great surprise to both Nellie and May.

The latter blushed with conscious guilt, of having slipped away from home "under false colors," as she had expressed it.

The former blushed with pleasure at again meeting the man to whom she owed her life, and whose handsome face she could not drive out of her heart.

"Why, May, my sweet little sister, how on earth is it that I find you here?" said Lieutenant Malcolm, after he had greeted Nellie and then kissed his adopted sister.

Nellie felt better, for her woman's eyes told her that there was only brotherly and sisterly love between those two.

"It's a long story, Andrew; but how is it I find you here?"

"I ran in here to see Mrs. and Miss Regis,

that I might express to them my deepest sympathy in their great affliction of which I only recently heard."

"I thank you, Lieutenant Malcolm; but I still have hope that my cousin is not dead."

"I sincerely hope that you may be right, Miss Regis, for, if you will allow me to say so, I had hoped that he would be able to clear away this cloud that hung over him, and having studied the whole case closely, I almost felt assured that he was the victim of cruel circumstances."

"I am glad to hear you say so, sir; but you have no idea the pleasure it is to me to know your sister," said Nellie, as though anxious to change the subject.

"I did not know that you were acquainted."

"Nor were we until an hour ago."

"I'll tell you all about it, brother Andrew, only you must keep my secret until I confess at home; but have you not received the letters written you of late?"

"Only yesterday when I put into New London, for I have been off on a long cruise eastward, and I certainly was rejoiced to learn that my father, whom I do not even remember, is at dear old Retreat, and also, from your letter, that he owes his life to Mr. Damar."

"There is a painting of the scene of rescue, Andrew," and May pointed to the painting, while she added:

"Miss Regis tells me that it was done by order of Mr. Damar, and she has presented it to me, as he, I believe intended it for me."

"The old gentleman in the stage window is your father, Andrew."

"God bless him," and the young sailor gazed long at the face of the father whom he had not seen to remember.

Just then the carriage drove up with Mrs. Regis, and excusing herself Nellie went to meet her mother and tell her of May's coming and that Lieutenant Malcolm was also there.

Mrs. Regis seemed surprised to hear of May's coming, but was already acquainted with the fact of the officer's being there as his vessel lay at anchor in Sea Vale Haven.

She greeted May most cordially, and expressed pleasure at seeing the lieutenant again at Sea Vale.

May was persuaded to remain all night, and Andrew Malcolm told her that he would go home with her on the morrow, it having been his intention to get a vehicle in the village and go to The Retreat from that point.

"One of our carriages are at your service, Lieutenant Malcolm, for my mother's is the only one used," said Nellie, and as Mrs. Regis also urged its acceptance, it was decided that they should start the next morning after breakfast for The Retreat.

"And why will you not accompany us, Miss Regis?" urged May.

Andrew Malcolm also begged her to do so, and Nellie said:

"I really would enjoy the drive through the country, and so will go, and return next day with the carriage."

"Do not feel alarmed, Mrs. Regis, if she stays over a day to rest," said May.

Mrs. Regis raised no objection, for she saw that Nellie was pale and sad, and a change would do her good.

And so it was that the next day the stylish turnout of Sea Vale rolled away upon its long drive to The Retreat.

Late in the afternoon they drove up to the mansion, all three delighted with their long drive and the mid-day dinner they had had at a country inn.

The welcome they received, the meeting between the old Californian and his son, made the heart of Nellie Regis glad, and then May came out boldly and made her confession of why she had gone away.

It was a sad blow to both Roger and Andrew Malcolm to hear of Duke Damar's sad fate; but the cheerful hope that Nellie had that he was not dead she soon imparted to them, and the evening was passed most pleasantly.

"Wait two days, Miss Regis, and I will return with you, for I only have a few days' leave," said Andrew Malcolm, when Nellie was discussing an early start the next morning.

All pleaded, and the result was that she wrote a telegram to be sent next day to her mother, telling of her intention, and she accepted the escort back of the handsome young sailor.

"It is wrong, I know, but I cannot help it, for I love him with all my heart and soul," she said to herself that night after she had retired.

Then she added:

"God have mercy upon me, for I am bound to Regis Rossmore."

"Oh! how cruel of him to so bind me, and I believe that I really hate him for the deception he practiced upon me."

Do not blame her, kind reader, for she was but human.

It was a delightful visit, that of Nellie Regis to The Retreat, and she gave herself up to its full enjoyment.

There was a cloud hanging over all in the fate of Duke Damar, and Nellie was drawn very near to May, for her woman's heart read the secret that the young girl carried in her bosom.

"She loves Duke," she said to herself.

"Poor May!" she added, and the tears came into her beautiful eyes.

She urged May to return with her, but this May declined, but promised some day to visit Sea Vale.

Then Nellie started back under the escort of Andrew Malcolm.

It was a lovely day and they enjoyed it fully.

They enjoyed their dinner together at the little inn, and both were sorry when they came in sight of Sea Vale.

Mrs. Regis did not show that she was annoyed at Nellie's staying, but she was very much so; but she invited Andrew Malcolm to dine with them, and he accepted the invitation, as the cutter was just visible heading into port for him.

As the cutter landed, a young officer came up to the mansion with an official document, which he gave to the lieutenant.

They were seated upon the piazza, Mrs. Regis, Nellie and the lieutenant, at the time, and breaking the seal, Andrew Malcolm's face lighted up with pleasure, while he said:

"This bears my promotion as captain, Mrs. Regis, and orders me to relieve Captain Boyd of command to-morrow."

"It is quite unexpected, I assure you."

Both ladies congratulated him upon his promotion, and Mrs. Regis was called away by a servant; Andrew Malcolm asked Nellie to take a walk with him.

She rose without a word, and the two walked together toward the little cemetery.

The sun was near its setting and the evening was most beautiful, all nature seeming to be in repose.

"This is a sacred spot, Miss Regis, and what I would say to you is as sacred as the memories that hover about the place."

"I am a sailor, and am called away from you for an indefinite time, so let that pardon my telling you, whom I have known so short a while, that the whole devotion of my heart is yours."

"I love you, Nellie, with a love that was never given to another, and if you can but return that love I will be the happiest of men."

"Nellie, can I hope that I have won your little heart all for my own?"

He fairly started as he now looked upon her face.

She was as white as the gravestones by which she stood.

"Nellie, have I startled you by this suddenly telling you of my love?" he asked, anxiously.

"No, you have not startled me, for I have guessed what you would say, and I wanted you to say it."

"I wanted you to tell me that you loved me, for, with all my heart and soul I love you, Andrew."

"But, Andrew Malcolm, it can never be that our loves can know happiness."

"More I cannot say to you; but this day our paths in life must divide, you to go your way, I to go mine."

"But, Nellie, if I obey you, you will not some day recall me?"

"There is some barrier, your words tell me; but what it is I will not ask."

"But, should that barrier be removed, will you not call me back to you?" he pleaded.

"I will."

"You pledge yourself to this?"

"I do."

He did not touch her hand, but turned and the two walked slowly back to Sea Vale.

The next day Captain Andrew Malcolm sailed in his pretty vessel, but his heart was full of bitterness.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MYSTERIOUS MOVEMENTS.

I WILL now return to the little yacht, which we left in the very jaws of the storm which swept down upon the Sound and left much death and disaster behind.

Though feeling deeply his arrest, for such it was by the three detectives, Duke Damar saw that the safety of the boat and the lives of himself and the three men depended upon him.

He had confidence in his little yacht, and he knew that he could scud before the gale as the safest way of escaping destruction.

The wall of waters for a moment threatened to engulf the small craft; but the firm hand at the tiller and the cool head of Duke Damar saved them, and the little vessel went flying away like a frightened bird before the storm.

It was impossible to see anything before them, and all they could do was to hold on for their lives.

"It is worse than we thought it would be," assented one of the detectives.

The little cat-rig had gone down under the first blow, and the yacht seemed alone upon the waters.

"Do you have any port in view?" asked one of the detectives.

"Yes, I shall run for Sag Harbor."

"That will not suit us," was the reply.

"We wish to go to the harbor above your home."

"Why?"

"There our craft awaits us."
 "It will be very risky."
 "We must take the risk."
 "As you please," and the yacht was put away for the harbor named.

It was on a bleak part of the coast, with no habitation near, and the point that jutted out had a light-house upon it.

This gave Duke Damar a chance to see where he was going, and he reached the harbor in safety.

To his surprise he saw that there was a schooner anchored there.

The anchor of the yacht was let go, and the schooner was hailed with orders to send a boat aboard.

Within the harbor the sea was not very rough, so that a boat was lowered from the schooner and came alongside.

Now, sir, I dislike to do it, but I must put you in irons," said the one who appeared to be the leader of the detectives.

"Put me in irons?" cried Damar, indignantly, and he started back.

But three revolvers were instantly leveled at him, and the detective said:

"The charge against you is a serious one, that of murder, and it is my duty to put you in irons."

"If you resist, I will kill you."

Duke Damar saw that the men would kill him, so he said:

"I can but submit; but you will allow me to go by my home?"

"No, we will send word to your home, and you must at once go on board the schooner."

This Damar did, and he was at once put in irons and taken in to the cabin.

He soon after felt the vessel under way, and asked one of his keepers who was with him to allow him to go on deck.

This request was granted, and Damar saw that the yacht was being towed astern.

Out into the tempest-swept Sound the schooner headed, and her bow was pointed right into its teeth.

The yacht astern plunged fearfully, and suddenly broke loose and was thrown upon her beam ends.

"The yacht is gone," cried Duke Damar; but no one paid any attention to him, or to the little craft, and the schooner, after holding on her way for a short while longer, put about and went flying before the gale toward the open sea.

Then Duke Damar was told to go into the cabin, and he retired to the bunk assigned to him, and then went to sleep, for he was one to take matters coolly, whether dangerous or not.

The morning dawned, and he was still kept in his cabin, but that night the schooner dropped anchor, and soon after he was taken off in a small boat and the detectives accompanied him.

He saw that they were in a large seaport, and, as well as he could judge, it was the harbor of Boston.

They were soon alongside of a large barque, riding at single anchor and with sails set, as though ready to depart.

"You have delayed me, sir," said the captain of the vessel, addressing one of the detectives.

"Yes; but we were delayed on account of the storm."

"Let me understand this, for I would know where I am being taken," said Duke Damar, and he addressed the captain of the barque.

"These gentlemen have you in charge, sir," was the reply.

And the captain turned away and gave orders to get up the anchor.

Damar was in the mean time led into the cabin and assigned to a very comfortable state-room.

He was told that the vessel was bound to San Francisco, and if he would pledge himself not to speak to any one excepting his three guards he would have his irons taken off and be allowed the freedom of the ship after they had gotten to sea.

He gladly gave the pledge and resigned himself to the situation, but asked:

"Was my letter given you sent as promised?"

"It was," was the reply of the leader of the three men.

"Well, I seem to be the victim of a cruel fate, and mystery hangs about me like a cloud."

"When and how will it all end?"

"Here I am taken prisoner without being allowed to go to my home or to communicate personally with a friend."

"I am put on board a schooner which carries me to Boston, as I am sure the port is, and then transferred to this barque, which seems to have been awaiting my coming, and we are bound on a long voyage around the Horn to San Francisco, where I am to be tried for the murder of a woman."

"Well, I will enjoy the sea voyage at least, and the barque is clean, comfortable and will doubtless set a good table, and I see a case of books there, so can while away the time, I guess."

"As for my three guards, I do not know exactly what to make of them."

"But I shall not worry until there is real cause for it."

So saying to himself Duke Damar turned in for the night and was soothed to sleep by the rocking of the vessel upon the ocean.

CHAPTER XL. STILL UNKNOWN.

WHEN the horseman whom Lone Dick, the Trapper supposed was the real Buffalo Bill went on up the canyon on the trails of his Double and the Specter he closely eyed the tracks he was following.

They led him out of the canyon, across a valley and into a pretty rough country.

The trail showed that it was often followed before, and the fresh tracks were of the Indian pony ridden by the Specter, going and returning, and those of the horse ridden by the one who followed on her trail.

At last the trails led into a rocky vale, and turned into a stream.

Here the trailer paused.

He was evidently at a loss which way the trail led from there, whether up or down the stream.

"I will try it down-stream first," he said.

And into the water he rode and held on his way with the current.

The stream was about two feet deep, clear as crystal, but, flowing rapidly, not a hoof-mark remained upon the bottom.

For over two miles he went along, closely eying the banks on either side, where it was possible for a horse to get ashore, to see if he could discover any trace.

But not a sign met his vision, and holding on until night he decided to camp where he was and continue his search the next day.

This he did, and when he awoke the next morning he found upon the sand where he had ridden out of the water that some one had written with a stick:

"Be warned!"

"Give up the trail you are on!"

"Death awaits you if you follow it to the end!"

"Well, this is a warning in the sand; but it only makes me the more anxious to find the end of the trail."

"Some one surely knows that I am here, and came pretty close to me last night."

"I must be more watchful."

So saying, the speaker saddled his horse and rode back into the stream to resume his search.

All day long he kept it up, for, after riding a couple of miles further down the stream, he returned up it, keeping the closest lookout on either side.

He passed the place where he had entered the stream and went on his way for miles, but without finding the slightest trace of a trail having left the water.

"I am at fault, for they surely left the water before coming so far, either up or down the stream, and as I cannot find the horseman's tracks, he must have been a pard of the Specter, as Lone Dick calls the girl."

"Well, I will return and try another deal."

So the scout returned as he had come, to a point where he could command a view of the canyon and see any one who entered it, or came out of it.

Here he went into camp, and hiding his horse back among the rocks, he took up a position where he could watch.

Taking a book from his saddle-pouch he began to read; but at each moment his eyes were raised to the trail.

Thus the day passed, and he ate his supper and slipped down to the trail, having first saddled his horse and left him in a convenient spot to come at call.

But the hours passed away and the scout went to sleep.

In the morning he awoke, and there he beheld, written on a rock not far from him, and well written too in red clay:

"ONCE MORE I WARN YOU!"

"LEAVE THE TRAIL YOU ARE ON BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!"

"Well, this is a strange warning; but I am only kept from following the trail by not knowing where to go."

"I'll be forced to take this advice until I can get the aid of Surgeon Powell and Mustang Jack."

"Then I'll find the end of that trail if I have to call on every scout at Fort Forward to help me."

So saying Buffalo Bill mounted his horse and rode on down to Lone Dick's to breakfast.

"Pard, I thought they had yer," said Lone Dick.

"No, and I did not get them."

"Seen any sign?"

"Not enough to work on to a success."

"Waal, thar's breakfast enough for both of us, so set to work at it."

This the scout did with a relish, and then asked:

"Have you seen any signs, Lone Dick?"

"Seen the Specter."

"The girl?"

"Ther woman who are dead."

"She passed here?"

"She did."

"When?"

"Yesterday."

"Alone?"

"With her horse."

"The same white horse?"

"No, she were on a black one."

The scout was silent a moment and then said:

"Well, she has outwitted me that is certain."

"Yas, sperits gits ahead o' humans all ther time."

"As she was on her black horse she surely got to her retreat to make the change."

"Well, Lone Dick, I'll leave you for the present, but you may expect to see me some time again," and Buffalo Bill mounted his horse and rode away down the canyon, and he saw by the trail that the strange horseman had indeed passed over it again, since he had followed her and the horseman who was on her track.

Not a soul did he meet on his way to Hank's Ranch, and as he rode up late in the afternoon, he saw the landlord and Mustang Jack seated upon the piazza.

They eyed him curiously, and Hank called out:

"Waal, pard, who in thunder be you, Buffalo Bill or his Double?"

"Buffalo Bill, Hank."

"So t'other fellow said."

"What other fellow, Hank?"

"Buffalo Bill."

"I am Buffalo Bill, I told you, Hank."

"Waal, pard, the other gent come here and said as how he'd been on ther trail, tuk breakfast and went off on Ribbon Moses's hearse, leading his horse behind."

"This morning?"

"No, yesterday."

"Then it is too late to follow."

"In course it is; but Moses comes in to-night."

"Well, I'll see where he left this Double of mine, for I am getting more and more anxious to see him," said Buffalo Bill, and then he turned to Mustang Jack and added:

"Why did you not see if this man was myself or not?"

"I thought sart'in it were you, Pard Cap'n, so what c'd I do?"

That night Ribbon Moses returned, and Buffalo Bill at once walked up to him.

"Lordy, pard, how did you git here?"

"I came this afternoon, Moses."

"But how?"

"Rode here on horseback."

"Pard Bill, am I again mistook?"

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't you go out with me on my eastward run, sittin' on the box alongside o' me?"

"I did not."

"Didn't you hitch your horse ahind the hearse?"

"No."

"And didn't a pard o' yourn take your horse from you at the Red Rock Spring, while you went on with me?"

"No."

"And didn't you, at the end o' my run, take Slim Dave's hearse on eastward, and tell me good-by, as you wouldn't see me again right away?"

"No, Ribbon Moses, I did not."

"Then, Pard Bill, I got ther wrong bull by ther horns, fer it were your Double sure as shoot-in'."

"Yes, Ribbon Moses, it was my Double, and strange indeed he must be like me to deceive you, Hank and Mustang Jack."

"Some day I'll get a look at him myself."

"Come, Jack, we will start on our return to the fort."

"To-night, cap'n?" asked Jack, who evidently did not like the idea of leaving comfortable quarters for a long night ride.

"Yes, to-night," was the reply of Buffalo Bill, and an hour after they started on the trail for the fort.

CHAPTER XLI. A TRAITOR'S FATE.

BUFFALO BILL saw that Mustang Jack did not care to leave Hank's Ranch; but he did not yield to his wish to remain until the following morning, and so the two departed upon their way.

"I wonder if we will be warned of danger this time, Jack?" he said, as they drew near the spot where Damar, Powell and himself had met the Indian girl.

But no one was there to give warning, and, knowing that the Indian girl had always taken the trail to the westward, instead of the direct one, Buffalo Bill decided to go that way, hoping that he might find some trace of her, and with Mustang Jack be able to find out who she was.

But they reached the spot where the trail ran again into the main one, and had caught no sight of any one.

"I'll get down and feel for fresh tracks," said Mustang, and he crept along upon the ground, lighting a match now and then to see if he could discover any trail.

"Thar's somebody been along here, pard."

cap'n, and that recent," he said, as Buffalo Bill dismounted and joined him.

"You are right, Jack, and there were three of them, and with shod horses, too," said Buffalo Bill, lighting a match and examining the tracks. Then he said:

"I'll see what trail they go."

The matches revealed that they went on toward the fort, and had come from the direction of Lone Dick's canyon.

"Well, we'll go on, but be watchful, Jack."

"We's got ter be," said Mustang Jack, and they rode slowly along on their way.

But they had not gone very far before Mustang Jack's horse went lame.

It was impossible to go on, and so Buffalo Bill decided to go into camp for the rest of the night.

"What is the matter with him, Jack?" he said, somewhat impatiently, as he was anxious to get on to the fort.

"I don't know, Pard Cap'n."

"He hain't picked up a stone, nor have he cut himself on a rock," said Mustang Jack, examining the leg of his horse.

"Well, we will hunt a camping-place."

And the scout soon found one.

The horses were lariatied out, the bedding taken from the pack-animal, and they made themselves as comfortable as possible.

Buffalo Bill was very tired, and yet he could not sleep.

He would drop off into slumber for an instant, but would awake with a start.

Somehow he seemed to feel a foreboding of evil.

But he lay still, and suddenly saw Mustang Jack rise up cautiously.

It was dark, but he could see him by the light of the stars.

He was about to speak to him, but checked himself and saw the scout rise up with the greatest caution and creep away from his blankets.

He went off in the direction they had come to camp and disappeared.

"He has heard something that is suspicious," muttered the scout.

And feeling that his comrade was on the alert he dropped off to sleep again.

But he soon woke up with a start as before, and feeling very thirsty got up to go to the spring near by for a drink, for he had camped there before and knew the locality.

As he passed the blankets of Mustang Jack he saw that he had not returned.

Going on to the spring, which was some sixty feet distant, he dipped up some water in his hand and quenched his thirst.

Then he started to return, and halted suddenly, for he beheld several forms cautiously approaching the camp.

Instantly his hands were upon his revolvers, which fortunately he had on, but his rifle was by the tree where he slept.

Nearer and nearer came the dark forms, and then they halted.

Their arms moved together, and then from in front of them came four flashes from as many rifles.

The rifles were aimed at his blankets and the bullets struck with a dull thud.

But at almost the same moment Buffalo Bill sprang to the shelter of a tree, and his revolvers rattled forth merry music, though deadly.

There were wild cries of alarm, a death-shriek, a groan and running feet.

The scout continued to fire slowly with one revolver, down the direction that led from the camp to the trail.

Feeling assured that the surprise he had given his foes had put them to flight, Buffalo Bill crept away through the timber, completely encircling the camp.

He had seen one of his foes fall, and hoped that he had hit others, for one had not run away as rapidly as his two remaining comrades.

Feeling unwilling to return to camp, as he might be shot from an ambush, he crouched down by the three horses, and there awaited until dawn.

"What can have become of Mustang Jack, I wonder?"

"Now his ears heard some one near and when he went off to reconnoiter, he was caught by these fellows."

"That is the way of it; but I hope they did not kill him."

"But who are they, I wonder?"

Being unable to answer his question, Buffalo Bill was compelled to wait until dawn.

Then he began, as the day brightened, to look about him.

When at last it was broad daylight he approached his camp.

The blankets of Jack were unoccupied.

But some forty feet away lay a form upon its face.

"My God! it is Mustang Jack!"

Quickly the scout ran to the side of the dead man.

It was Mustang Jack without doubt.

A bullet-wound was in his head, another in his neck and a third in his heart.

"He caught three of my bullets; but can he have been a traitor?"

"Why, yes, he certainly was, for I saw the four men come together and each fired their rifles."

"Here is his rifle and a shot fired out of it."

"He meant to kill me; but for what?"

"I have always been his friend."

"And who were his comrades?"

"I'll see if I brought down some game," and with this grim remark Buffalo Bill went back and saddled his horse.

The animal belonging to Mustang Jack stood near, and the scout saw that his left fore-leg was peculiarly swollen.

Stepping forward he examined the leg and said:

"Aha! I see the cause of the trouble, for Mustang Jack tied this string around the leg to lame his horse so that we would have to camp."

He cut the string off and rubbed and bathed the swollen limb.

"Poor horse, you'll soon be all right," he said, and then, taking his rifle and mounting his own horse he rode away toward the trail.

He saw a stream of blood as he rode along and muttered:

"I hit that fellow hard."

"He must be near, if his comrades did not carry him off."

A short distance further on he saw the man lying in the trail.

Instantly he spurred toward him and dismounted.

"He is dead; but his body is still warm."

"Now I remember that I heard something like groans."

"Ah! I know this face, and he is a deserter from the fort, who the boys said had turned road-agent."

"Well, I'll carry the body back to camp and think the matter over, for this plot against my life by white men I must get at the bottom of, and I will!"

CHAPTER XLII.

THE UNKNOWN.

BUFFALO BILL was deeply moved at the discovery that Mustang Jack was a traitor.

He had never believed the man to be so vile, and it cut him deeply.

When he brought the body of the other man who had attempted his life and laid it alongside of that who had been his comrade, he stood gazing down sadly at the two.

Then he bent over and began to search the clothing to see if he could find any clue as to what was their motive.

"If they were road-agents, and I believe both were, they certainly had no gold to get from robbing me."

"No, they wished to get me out of the way, yes, and Surgeon Powell, too."

"Yes, for that matter Lieutenant Damar also, for we three were warned of an ambush in wait for us."

"It looks as though that Indian girl, or rather white girl in Indian costume, was in league with them but proved to be our friend."

"But Jack did not wish to leave last night."

"Well, he had some motive; and now to see if I can find out what it was."

"Can it be that he is in league with this Double of mine?"

"It might be, and—"

"No, others have seen my Double, too."

"Ah! here is a note."

There was no address upon it, and it had a hole in it as though it had been stuck to something, a tree perhaps, with a wooden peg.

Opening it the scout read, and the writing was in a bold, educated hand:

"I go East for awhile."

"See that B. B. is done for, and also the S. S."

"With these two out of the way, gold will be easier to get."

CHIEF."

"Well, this proves that Mustang belongs to a band of outlaws, and it accounts for some of our secrets at the fort being known."

"B. B. certainly means me, and S. S. is intended for the Surgeon Scout, Powell."

"But who is the one who signs himself 'Chief'?"

"Ha! it must be my Double, for he has gone East."

"Perhaps day may break upon this mystery after all."

"Now to see what this fellow has about him."

A search discovered several bits of folded paper, such as he held in his hand.

All had the same peg-mark through them, and one looked as though it had been out in the rain.

There were three of them, and one said:

"M. J. is with B. B."

"He will keep K. posted."

CHIEF."

Another was:

"Keep watch for traitor among K."

"There must be one, for three times have parties been warned of ambush for them—D. D.—S. S.—and B. B."

CHIEF."

The third piece of paper was something similar to the one found on Mustang Jack, for it was:

"I go East, but go to rendezvous regularly for news."

"Be Spy on K—Find out traitor."

"B. B. and S. S. must be gotten rid of at once."

CHIEF."

"Well, this shows the whole game, and the sooner I get Frank Powell on the trail with me the sooner the secret will be known."

"Now to bury these poor fellows, who were very prompt to try and carry out their chief's order to get rid of me."

"I'm right glad I was thirsty last night, for had I not been I would have been in their place now."

"Well, pard, I'll give you a decent burial, though you don't deserve it at my hands, save that you are human beings."

"D. D. meant Duke Damar as one who had been warned, and the chief seems to know that there is a spy in the camp, so I must find out this girl and warn her of her danger."

Then, with a hatchet which he took from his pack-saddle, Buffalo Bill began to dig a grave in a gully, and soon had it deep enough to contain both bodies.

Into it they were put, the grave filled up and then the scout cooked his breakfast, and mounting his horse started for the fort, leading Mustang Jack's horse, which had gotten over his lameness, now that the cause was removed, while his pack-horse followed obediently.

As he rode out to the trail he saw here a stick which was bent in the direction of his camp.

Going back up the trail he saw others, and this proved to him that Mustang Jack had first sought for the trail of the three horsemen, and finding it had stuck those sticks along to guide them to the camp.

With this discovery he turned toward the fort, when suddenly he saw in the trail before him, the Indian girl, mounted upon her white horse.

"Now I will know all," he said resolutely, and he rode toward her.

She was seated quietly upon her pony, apparently awaiting his coming, and there was that about her, Indian girl though she appeared to be, that caused him to raise his hat.

She bowed gracefully and said:

"Buffalo Bill is again in danger."

"And you again warn me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"The Red Rose would not see you die."

"Where lies my danger?"

"Ahead somewhere, but I know not where."

"Who are my foes?"

"There will be foes."

"Red-skins?"

"I cannot say."

"Has the Red Rose seen me since we parted the other day?"

"I will not say."

"Did the Red Rose warn me of danger by writing in the sand and with clay upon a rock?"

"The Red Rose has nothing to say."

"Will the Red Rose tell me if she has seen another person just like me?"

"There is but one Buffalo Bill," was the complimentary, but evasive reply.

"Will the Red Rose not answer me?"

"No."

"Will she not tell me who Chief is?"

He saw her start at the question, but she replied:

"Does Buffalo Bill ask of the Sioux chief?"

"No, of the Chief of the Road-Agents, who are also known as Knights of the Trail."

"I can tell nothing of any chief."

"You will not?"

"I will not."

"Suppose I tell the Red Rose that I can warn her of danger?"

"The Red Rose has no fear."

"Does the Red Rose not fear that she may have a spy on her track?"

Again she started, and involuntarily glanced about her.

"Who could be the foe of the Red Rose?"

"She would know best."

Then she asked, quickly:

"Where is the friend of the White Chief?"

"What friend?"

"His comrade,"

"Mustang Jack?"

"Yes."

"How did the Red Rose know that he was my comrade?"

"It does not matter; but where is he?"

"Dead."

"Dead!"

The word came in a cry from her lips.

"The Red Rose seems startled."

"Where is he?" she eagerly asked.

"Dead, as I told you."

"When did he die?"

"Last night."

"Where?"

"In camp."

"How?"

"I killed him."

"He attacked you, and with others?"

"You seem to know."

"I do, is it not so?"

"It is."

"Four men?"
 "Three besides Mustang Jack."
 "And the other three?"
 "One lies in the same grave with Mustang Jack, but the others escaped."
 "How did the White Chief escape?"
 "I was wakeful, saw Mustang Jack slip out of camp, and being thirsty, went to the spring for water, and saw the four men as they crept near and fired upon my blankets."
 "I returned the fire, with the result I told you."
 "You bear a charmed life, Buffalo Bill."
 "You use strange language for an Indian girl."
 She tossed her head impatiently and asked:
 "Do you not believe I am an Indian?"
 "I do not."
 "Who do you think I am?"
 "Some one who has been unfortunate enough to become leagued with outlaws."
 She sighed and made no reply, and Buffalo Bill said:
 "Now let me read you something that will put you on your guard."
 Then he read aloud the lines that spoke of there being a spy in the camp.
 "Where did you get that paper?"
 "From the body of one of the men who attempted to murder me."
 She seemed lost in thought, and then asked:
 "Which way did the other two men go?"
 "Their trail led toward the mountains."
 "They were mounted?"
 "Yes, their horses were left on this trail when they came to my camp, and they took the animal of their dead friend with them."
 "Where are you now going?"
 "To the fort."
 "Sure?"
 "Yes."
 "Will you do me a favor?"
 "What is it?"
 "Will you?"
 "As I believe I owe my life to you, I will say yes."
 "Do not follow my trail."
 "Why?"
 "I have your promise and you are not a man to break your word."
 "Be cautious, for there are foes sworn to kill you."
 "Good-by!"
 She had ignored her Indian way of speaking in the third person, and dropped a certain disguise from her voice, both of which the scout noticed.
 As she uttered the word "good-by," she wheeled her horse and rode back along the trail and turned up toward the scout's camp of the night before.
 "Well, she has shut me off this time, that's certain; but I didn't promise I would not follow her next time."
 "Now for the fort," and Buffalo Bill once more rode on his way.

CHAPTER XLIII.

BUFFALO BILL TELLS HIS STORY.

WITHOUT further adventure Buffalo Bill arrived at Fort Forward, and he timed himself so that he would reach there at night.
 Having put his horse up he sought the quarters of Surgeon Powell, in which a light still burned, although it was after midnight.
 A tap upon his door was answered by the voice of Surgeon Powell:
 "Come in."
 "Ho, Frank, how goes it?"
 "Buffalo Bill! thank Heaven you are safe, for I was greatly worried about you," and Frank Powell wrung the scout's hand.
 "You had need to be," was the quiet response.
 "I have no doubt but that you have been through the mill, and I would have gone after you long ere this, but my poor assistant has been lying at the point of death with brain fever and I could not leave him."
 "You were right, and I knew that something had kept you back."
 "But tell me what you have done."
 "Next to nothing."
 "I cannot believe that of you, Bill."
 "It is true."
 "Did you see your Double?"
 "No."
 "He had skipped?"
 "Oh no, he was very much around, but not when I was about."
 "This is remarkable."
 "Frank, if I was superstitious, I would be afraid of that fellow."
 "What did you learn about him?"
 "Enough to know that he cannot be told from myself, and he has fooled Hank, Ribbon Moses and others, for his horse, saddle, bridle and entire outfit are like mine."
 "He is playing a dangerous game."
 "He has played a very successful one, for those who see him are completely fooled."
 "And he still calls himself Buffalo Bill?"
 "He certainly does; but I have seen your Indian girl, too."
 "Indeed?"
 "Yes, twice."

"What do you think of her?"
 "She is no Indian."
 "So I thought."
 "I am sure, for I got her excited, and in talking to me she dropped the Indian twang altogether, and more, she used language such as no red-skin can, unless one that is highly educated."
 "Did she warn you of danger?"
 "Yes."
 "It is most strange; but did you follow her trail?"
 "To the end, yes."
 "Where did it lead?"
 "Into a stream, and there I lost it and one other, too."
 "What other?"
 "My Double's."
 "You saw him?"
 "Oh no, but I saw his trail, following on that of the girl's, and I followed them up the canyon where old Lone Dick lives."
 "He was there, and told me that a Specter had gone by, and soon after that I had followed."
 "I convinced him that I had not, and then set off to trail them both, and lost them at the stream as I told you."
 "So did I lose her there."
 "I camped on that trail for two nights, but it panned out nothing, although one night I found a warning had been written in the sand of the stream, and the next night another had been most cleverly put upon a rock with red clay."
 "This is strange."
 "It is strange that I was not able to discover who did it, and although I had my eye on that canyon, Lone Dick told me that he had again seen the Specter, and there was the fresh trail of her horse to prove it."
 "Going back to Hank's I found that my Double had been there and had taken the stage for the East."
 "Ribbon Moses told me that he had led his horse to Red Rock Spring and there a man had taken the animal, while my Double continued on eastward, Moses all the time sure that it was me."
 "This is remarkable, Bill."
 "Yes, it is mysterious, I admit."
 "I had already been trailing my Double from the Red Rock, accompanied by Mustang Jack, but without any result."
 "And did Jack not see your Double?"
 "Oh, yes."
 "Why did he not hold to him?"
 "Because, Frank, he was in league with him."
 Surgeon Powell sprung to his feet at this startling announcement, and it seemed hard for him to believe what the scout told him.
 "And where is he, Bill?" asked the surgeon.
 "He is dead."
 "You killed him, Bill?"
 "I had to, but at the time I did not know who he was."
 "No man objects to taking the life of a fellow-being more than I do, for I feel deeply to deprive one of life, to make a grave in the world, Frank; but here on this frontier, life is held cheap and one must kill to save himself and others."
 Buffalo Bill spoke with deep feeling, and Frank Powell rejoined:
 "No one better than myself, Buffalo Bill, knows the truth of what you say."
 "But I feel that neither you nor I have wantonly taken human life, even if it be a red-skin's."
 "But tell me of this traitor Mustang Jack?"
 Buffalo Bill told the whole story, and showed the letters which he had gotten from the dead bodies.
 "I brought Jack's horse, and the arms of both of the men with me, and in the morning shall place the whole affair before the colonel."
 "And then?"
 "How is your patient?"
 "Very low."
 "Then he will not be so that you can go for quite awhile?"
 "No, if he does not die, and the chances between death and life are about even, I will not be able to leave him for weeks."
 "Then I must be patient and wait, for I want you to go with me on this trail, Frank, and in the mean time I can go scouting up toward the Indian country."
 "I will go with you the earliest moment I can, Cody, rest assured on that, and I believe that we can together solve this mystery."
 "But we will see what the colonel says in the morning."
 The next day Buffalo Bill made his report to the commandant, placing all the story before him, and he was acquitted of all blame in the killing of Mustang Jack, while it was a great surprise to all in the fort to know that the scout had proven a traitor.
 The killing of the deserter, who had turned road-agent, was also entered as justifiable, and the man was thought to have gotten the punishment he deemed.
 "You can take a company, Cody, and hunt these fellows out," said the colonel, when he had heard the whole story.

"No, colonel, I would prefer to wait until Surgeon Powell can accompany me, for we two work well in harness together, and I believe we can do better than if I had fifty men."
 "When we have found the den, then we can come for the men to hunt the foxes."
 "I guess you are right, Cody, and as soon as Powell can be spared you can go," replied the colonel.
 And so it was decided.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A SWIM FOR FREEDOM.

THE barque upon which Duke Damar had been taken by the detectives was a very fast vessel and rapidly ran down the coast.
 She was a stanch craft as well, being a very comfortable sea-boat, and carried a large crew.
 Her cabin was as fine as an ocean steamer's, but there were no passengers on board excepting the three detectives and their prisoner.
 Finding the fare excellent, his state-room pleasant and plenty of books to read, Duke Damar really enjoyed the voyage, only there was that feeling which he could not shake off that he was being taken away from home to stand accused of murder when the vessel should reach port.
 One night Duke Damar lay awake in his state-room.
 He had overheard the sailors talking about him and prophesying bad luck for the vessel, as it had a murderer on board.
 He had never been allowed forward of amidships, and he had kept his word never to hold converse with the crew.
 He found the captain a stern, silent man, and other than to help him at the table he had never addressed a word to the prisoner.
 So the weeks had gone by until that night when Duke Damar lay awake in his bunk.
 The vessel was barely moving through the waters, and soon her rolling and the flapping sails told him that she was wholly becalmed.
 Then he heard the voice of the mate on deck say:
 "We are in for it until sunrise, when we will get a breeze."
 Then came the words:
 "There's another craft yonder also becalmed."
 "Yes, she looks like an American."
 "And doubtless is, bound for some of the Northern ports."
 "She's not very far off, sir."
 "Out of hailing distance, quartermaster, or I'd hail her."
 Duke Damar arose on one elbow and listened to this conversation.
 Then he heard the mate say:
 "I'll lay down and get forty winks, quartermaster, so call me if anything turns up."
 "Ay, ay, sir."
 Softly Duke Damar slipped out of bed and began to dress.
 He did not put on his shoes and stockings, nor his coat and hat.
 Then he opened his state-room door noiselessly and looked out into the cabin.
 All was quiet there and the lamp burned dimly.
 A snore was heard from the captain's state-room, and one of the detectives played an accompaniment to the skipper's nasal music.
 Across the cabin stole the prisoner, and from a hook on one side of the companionway he took a coiled rope.
 One end he made fast to a ring-bolt, and the other let fall out of the stern port, for they were open, as the night was warm in that latitude.
 Out of the stern window then Duke Damar slipped, and lowered himself into the sea.
 Diving, he went some distance from the barque before he arose.
 When he did so he looked about him and like a phantom in the darkness he beheld the vessel of which the mate had spoken.
 She was nearly a mile away, but he struck out boldly for her.
 He knew that he was in deadly danger.
 The current of the sea might bear him far away, and sharks might prove his foes.
 But he had made up his mind to make the venture, and boldly he had made the effort.
 With strong, steady strokes he held on his way, and glancing behind him now and then, he saw that the barque was getting dimmer and dimmer in the distance, while the brig loomed up more boldly.
 There seemed to be a current against him, but he struggled on and at last swam under the stern of the vessel which he had risked his life to reach.
 It was impossible for him to climb up there, so he swam around to the bows and, catching hold of the chains, drew himself up to a resting-place.
 He had been successful thus far, and not caring to go on board until compelled to do so, he sat there praying for a wind to come and bear the brig away from the barque.
 As dawn drew near his prayer was answered, for there came a breath of air over the waves, then a lull, and a slight puff followed.
 Slowly the brig began to move, the sails filled and she went along at a five-knot pace.
 Seated upon his perch, Duke Damar saw that

the barque also felt the wind and began to move ahead.

Gradually the two vessels were lost sight of from each other's decks, and the prisoner congratulated himself upon his escape.

The darkness was just giving way to dawn when he clambered over the bows and gave the watch a fright they never forgot.

A yell broke from their lips as they beheld a form clad in white, and dripping wet, suddenly appear before them.

With one accord they yelled in chorus and flew aft, firmly convinced that it was the Devil, Neptune, or a ghost.

Springing to the deck Duke Damar quickly followed, while he called out:

"Hold, men! I am only a mate in distress."

Hearing his voice and words the men looked ashamed and watched him as he walked up to the mate who held the deck.

"Well, sir, who are you, and where the deuce did you come from?" asked the mate.

"I am an American, sir, and I came from on board a vessel that passed near you."

"What, went to sleep and fell overboard?"

"No, sir, I got overboard to swim to your vessel."

"Ah! from the barque that lay near us in the calm?"

"Yes, sir."

"You deserted then?"

"I was not one of her crew to desert."

"Ho, Bennett, what's the matter?" called out a gruff voice from the cabin.

"A man who has swum to us from the barque, captain, and scared the watch into fits."

"Send him down."

The mate gave an order to the helmsman and led Duke Damar below.

The captain, a bluff-looking old sea-dog, was just dressing, and said to Duke Damar:

"Well, sir, are you playing Neptune, coming on board out of the sea?"

"I risked my life, sir, to swim to you, for I am one in distress."

"I am an American, late an officer in the army, and was dwelling at my home on Long Island Sound, when I was arrested and carried off by three detectives."

"They charge me with the murder of a woman, and I am being taken to California to be tried for my life, when I am guiltless of the charge."

"If you will carry me to my home I will give you all the proof necessary that I speak the truth, and as I am a man of wealth, I will pay you well for your services."

"Hearing men on the barque say that a vessel lay becalmed near, I determined to risk my life and swim to you."

"I have done so, sir, and you have my story."

"You don't look like a murderer, sir, and I will take you with me to Cuba and give you over to the United States Consul, for I do not return to the United States for half a year."

"I thank you, sir, and I will repay you for your kindness."

"I don't wish pay; but I hope you can prove your innocence."

"Mate, tell the cook to get the gentleman some dry clothes and have breakfast ready soon."

"Here, sir, take a glass of grog with me to keep the cold out."

Duke Damar accepted the invitation willingly, for he was feeling the need of a stimulant after his long swim and sitting in his wet clothes.

As he arose from the breakfast-table the mate called down.

"The barque is putting about, sir, as though to pursue us."

CHAPTER XLV.

A BOND BETWEEN THEM.

AFFAIRS at The Retreat went on in the even tenor of their way, after the visit of Andrew Malcolm, accompanied by Nellie Regis.

Not only did the two brothers hope that Captain Andrew Malcolm would marry the beautiful heiress to Sea Vale, but May also hoped so.

"What do you think of her, father?" asked May, when the two had departed from The Retreat on their drive back to Sea Vale.

"Think of her, child?"

"Why, I have no words to express my admiration, and can only say that she is lovely beyond all compare."

"Don't forget May, brother, for she is one I never saw the equal of, until I saw Miss Regis."

"I really didn't know there were two such lovely girls in the world, and yet I've seen 'em," said Roger Malcolm.

"I asked you what you thought of Nellie Regis, and you are comparing me with her, uncle."

"Oh! if I only were as beautiful as she!"

"You are, you are equally so," said the two old men, in chorus.

"I thank you, father and uncle; but do you know, I am just in love with her myself."

"So am I!" cried Roger Malcolm.

"Egad, if I was younger I'd ask her to be a mother to you, Nellie," said her father.

"I hope she may be my sister some day."

"By Jove! that's so."

"You mean that she may marry Andrew?"

"Yes."

"Lordy! can he win her?"

"I hope so."

"He ought to, for he's a handsome dog, and has most winning ways."

"If he doesn't talk love to her on that long ride I'll disinherit him," said the father.

"Me, too," echoed the uncle.

"Well, she certainly is lovely, in face, form and character; but I almost fear that she is engaged."

"Deuce take it! too bad," bluntly said Roger Malcolm.

"My poor boy! it will break his heart, for how can he help loving her?" his brother said.

"It may not be so, only I feared it, from what Mrs. Regis said."

"What did she say?"

"She was talking to me about Andrew's saving Nellie's life as he did—"

"Lucky dog!"

"That ought to win her."

"And she said it was a very romantic meeting, indeed, but would make some one very jealous."

"Did she say who the somebody was, Nellie?" asked her father.

"She hinted that it was the young artist, Mr. Regis Rossmore, and the one who painted the painting we spoke of."

"There's a box here for you, Miss May, just brought from town," said a servant entering the room.

"Bring it in, Charles."

"Lor', miss, it is a great big box."

"Oh, the painting!" cried May, and she ran to the back piazza where two men had just placed a huge box.

It was quickly opened and the fine painting of Regis Rossmore was revealed.

The painting was at once hung in the parlor at May's request, and the three stood gazing upon it.

"It is a splendid work of art," said Andrew Malcolm.

"Yes, and the portraits are fine, for see mine and May's, and as I remember the artist, who was my companion in the coach that day, and the young officer, Damar, and the surgeon and driver are also fine."

"Then, too, the scene is just the same and the road-agents perfect."

"It is wonderful," said Roger Malcolm.

"What a splendid face is Damar's."

"It won me from the first," Andrew Malcolm said.

May made no comment.

She stood with her eyes riveted upon the painting, or rather upon the face of Duke Damar.

Could it be that that splendid face would never look into her own again?

Could it be that such a face could hide a guilty soul?

Could it be that he was dead?

That he had died with the hand of Cain upon him?

These questions she asked herself over and over again.

With that painting in the house she seemed to feel better.

Her whole heart had gone out to Duke Damar, and yet she hid her grief from every eye.

Every night before she retired she would steal into the parlor with her lamp and look up at the face of Duke Damar.

And it was so in the morning.

She seemed to take a melancholy pleasure in this.

Then, too, when she sat at the piano, over which she had had it hung, she would sing plaintive songs until her heart was full.

One day she received a letter from Nellie Regis.

It was as follows:

"SEA VALE,
Sunday.

"MY DEAR MAY:—

"I wish to have you come and visit me here at Sea Vale."

"Come to stay just as long as you will and you will make me happy."

"Though I am out of society, being in mourning, I will do all in my power to give you a pleasant time, and we can have a few callers, some boating-parties, rides and drives."

"There is to be a frequent visitor, one who writes he is coming to the village to spend some time in work, and mother always invites him to dine."

"I refer to Mr. Regis Rossmore, the artist."

"He is most pleasant company, and you may enjoy his society; but I wish you with me while he is here."

"This is *entre nous*, but I need you, so don't fail me, dear May."

"Answer by return mail when to expect you, and ask your father and uncle to drive over with you for a week, for the change will do them both good."

"Mother joins me in this invitation most heartily, so come, all of you, for I will send for you."

"With love and expecting acceptance of my most urgent invitation, I remain affectionately,
"NELLIE REGIS."

"Somehow I do not believe that she likes this artist after all."

"It is her mother's match-making, I guess," said May after she had finished the letter.

Then she ran to the library where her father and uncle were, and told them of the invitation.

To her surprise and delight they both accepted the invitation, for her father had become quite himself once more since the arrival of his brother.

"Write that we will all come, Nellie, and will drive over in our own rig, so that Roger and myself can return at will."

"Yes, and you say Mr. Rossmore is to be there, Nellie?" asked Uncle Roger.

"Not as a guest at Sea Vale, uncle; but he will remain in the village and go on with his work, but Nellie writes that he will dine often at the Hall."

"That looks suspicious," said Andrew Malcolm.

"Bad for our boy, I fear."

"It would seem so; but I will be glad to meet the young artist, and if he is to win Nellie then he must be a splendid fellow, for if he broke her heart I'd call him out and shoot him."

"Me too," said Roger Malcolm eagerly.

Then May wrote the letter, and three days after the family-carriage rolled away from The Retreat with the two brothers and the lovely girl, and on behind was strapped a large trunk, while a coachman and footman were on the box.

The welcome all received at Sea Vale, from Mrs. Regis as well as Nellie, warmed their hearts, and the two brothers, whose rooms adjoined, discussed earnestly as to which was the most lovely, the splendid home or the Widow Regis.

The next day Regis Rossmore dined at Sea Vale, and he perfectly charmed the two brothers with his flow of wit.

"How do you like Mr. Rossmore, May?" asked Nellie that night, when they went to their rooms, which also adjoined.

There was something in Nellie's tone and look that struck May, and she asked:

"Do you wish me to tell you frankly, Nellie?"

"Yes, I want your honest opinion."

"I do not think I like him, I am sorry to say."

"Is he not handsome?"

"Remarkably so."

"A fine form?"

"Certainly, and looks like a soldier."

"He is very intelligent, witty, and has talent as an artist?"

"All, but somehow I am afraid of him."

"I thank you, May, for your frankness, for so am I afraid of him," was Nellie's low reply.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

THE two brothers, Andrew and Roger Malcolm, remained for a week at Sea Vale, and they regretted having to depart.

They were urged by both Mrs. Regis and Nellie to remain longer, but they felt that they ought to tear themselves away and return home.

The grand house, large and beautiful grounds, the excellent living, and old wines and liquors, not to speak of the cigars, together with the drives, scenery, sailing and balmy breezes, made them enjoy their visit to The Retreat.

Then they found the Widow Nesbit such a charming woman, and Regis Rossmore was such excellent company, while Nellie was just as sweet as she could be to the two old gentlemen.

But at last they said reluctant farewells, and telling May they hardly expected her home within the year, they rolled away in their carriage for The Retreat.

After their departure the house seemed quite dull, and Mrs. Regis remarked that she really felt most lonesome.

"I wish we could have Regis here, Nellie, for I hardly see any propriety in it, as he is named after my husband and I have known him from infancy," said Mrs. Regis one day.

"No, mother, it is best that Mr. Rossmore should remain where he is."

"In fact I wish he did not come any day to dinner," said Nellie, and her manner was pettish.

Mrs. Regis frowned but made no reply, yet she saw that the artist would not be welcome as a guest at the mansion.

One day while Nellie and May were seated in the former's room, talking together and engaged upon some embroidery, a servant came with a card for Miss Malcolm.

"For me, Sarah?" asked May, in surprise.

"Yes, miss."

"Did he not ask for Miss Regis also?"

"No, miss, only for you," the butler said.

"I do not know him," and May glanced at the card on which was written the name:

"Monsieur Fantastique."

"I suppose I will have to go and see who he is."

"Come, Nell."

"Not I, for he may be some old beau of yours whom you have forgotten."

"Well, I have forgotten him if I ever knew him," and May left the room.

Mrs. Regis was in the village, and the butler had retired to his dominion, so that there was no one near.

Entering the grand parlors, May beheld a man standing before the large mirror complacently eyeing himself.

He wore a blue coat with brass buttons, light checked pants with straps, a black velvet vest, spectacles and a waxed mustache and imperial.

"My dear mees, I vas zo glad to see you," he said, with the accent of a Frenchman, and he bent nearly double.

"I am Miss Malcolm, sir, if your card was meant for me," she said, coldly.

"It vas, mees, and I am ze Monsieur Fantastique."

"So your card informed me, sir; but may I ask why you have called, for I hardly recall having met you before?"

The parlors were not very bright; but, as she spoke May fixed her eyes more attentively upon her visitor, and then, with a slight cry she started back.

"Ah, you know me, sister mine?"

"Yes, I do know you, Roger, and I would know why you have come here?"

"For money."

"You cannot get any from me."

"Ah, yes, I will, for you must give it to me."

"I will not."

"Look here, May Malcolm, while you revel in wealth, I am starving," he said, fiercely.

"If you suffer you have brought it upon yourself, Roger."

"Don't preach, girl."

"I know the truth hurts you, Roger."

"You never did do anything for me," he said, sullenly.

"Oh, brother, do not say that, for you know that I used to give you all my spending money and that I gave you my jewelry, trinkets, and all the little souvenirs I had."

"No, Roger, I have nothing to reproach myself for in my treatment of you, and you know, too, that father has spent a small fortune in helping you out of scrapes."

"You are my brother, Roger Malcolm, but you are a bold, wicked man, your hands are crime-stained, and did I betray you you would go to the gallows."

"You will not betray me, for you can prove nothing."

"I can prove that you killed father's nurse, and meant to rob the house."

"Oh, no, for no one knows that you saw me that night, and the man who captured me is dead."

"Alas!"

"Oh, yes, you see that you have no hold on me, and if you do not help me, I tell you, May Malcolm, you shall rue it."

"I do not fear your threats."

"Well, I will strike at those you love—your father and your uncle."

"No, no, you would not do this, bad as you are."

"Yes, I would, and I will."

"How much do you want, Roger, to leave the country and never return?" asked May, suddenly.

"Why should I leave the country?"

"Because I will not give you a dollar unless you do."

"And never return?"

"Yes."

"I will require a snug sum, Miss Malcolm, to make an exile of myself."

"How much?"

"Say twenty thousand."

"You are crazy."

"That is my price."

"I could give you no such sum if I would."

"You have mother's diamonds in your keeping, and they are worth much more."

"For shame! do you mean that I should part with those?"

"Pawn them and get them out when you can."

"Never!"

"I must have money."

"I will not give it to you."

"Why?"

"Because it will go as all other has done, and do you no good."

"You must give me a thousand dollars, May."

"I will not."

"This is your decision?"

"Yes."

"Irrevocable?"

"Yes."

"Then I must get it at home."

"Oh, why did you come here—how did you find me?"

"I looked you up because I had to have money, and I knew that that terrible young soldier was dead, and I need have no fear now."

"I tell you, I will not give you the money, for I cannot, without going to father or uncle, raise over a hundred dollars."

"Ask your friend, for she's an heiress"

"I will not."

"Then dear father and Uncle Roger must suffer."

"Stay, Roger, what would you do?"

"Get money."

"How?"

"In any way that I can."

"I shall telegraph them, nay, I will have you arrested, be the consequences what they may, if you do not leave this place, yes, and go far from here."

Her eyes flashed as she spoke, and springing toward her he grasped her arm while he hissed forth:

"Do you dare threaten me?"

"Come, girl, I want those ear-rings, finger-rings and the elegant watch you wear, for the trinkets are worth a cool thousand, and if you do not meet me to-morrow at the boat-house with fifteen hundred in cash, I swear to you that no life shall stand in the way of my getting it."

"Come, off with the trinkets, or I'll pull them off."

She uttered a low cry, but it was heard, for a step sounded in the hall and the next moment Regis Rossmore entered the parlors.

"Was that your cry, Miss Malcolm?"

He had come upon the piazza and seated himself until he finished his cigar before ringing the bell.

A muttered curse escaped the lips of the man, but, bowing low, he said, in broken English:

"Oh, monsieur, my old pupil vas laugh, not cry."

"You vas make ze meestake, monsieur."

"Pardon me."

And the artist bowed low and was turning away when May called out:

"Oh, sir, do not leave me alone with this man, for I did cry out, as you supposed."

"What! I was not mistaken then?"

"Come, sir; what does this mean?"

"Oh, monsieur, my leetle pupil vas ze leetle frightened because I vas tell her I vas end my life."

"I vas French, monsieur, and Frenchmans commit vat you call ze suicide with *avec beaucoup* pleasure."

"If you do not get out, sir, I'll save you the pleasure of taking your own life," sternly said Regis Rossmore.

"Ze lady vill not tell me to go."

"Mr. Rossmore, let me explain, humiliating as it is for me to do so."

"This man is not a Frenchman, he is my own brother, and one who has chosen an evil career in life with every incentive to keep on an honorable course."

"He was cast off by my father, and since then I have done all in my power for him without my father's knowledge."

"He is wholly unworthy, and came here to extort from me a large sum of money."

"I refused, and I beg of you to see him safely away from here, and please say to the village constable that if he is seen about here to arrest him and I will appear against him, as he forces me to do so."

She spoke firmly, and Roger Malcolm saw that he had gone too far.

He had brought her to bay, and he knew that she was acting not for herself, but to save her father and uncle from his threats.

"Come, sir, you go with me," and Regis Rossmore grasped the arm of Roger Malcolm with a force that made him shriek.

"By Heaven! but there's but one man I ever met that has a grip like that, and you are—that man, Regis Rossmore," cried Roger Malcolm as he turned toward the light and got a full look into the face of the artist, who, at his words started back and cried:

"Rogers! can it be you?"

"Yes, I am the one you knew as Rogers."

"Now put me out, Regis Rossmore," was the cool reply of the scoundrel.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

In response to the remark of Roger Malcolm the artist said a few words in a low tone.

What they were May did not catch, but she said quickly, and with evident surprise at seeing that they were known to each other:

"You know my brother then, Mr. Rossmore, and he threatens you?"

"Know him, indeed I do, Miss Malcolm, though in his present disguise I did not, while my face being in shadow he did not recall me until he heard my name."

"I am sorry to see him here, threatening you, for he once saved my life, and that is why he defies me, knowing that I would not wish him harm."

Then turning to Roger Malcolm he continued, addressing him as he had known him in the past:

"Come, Rogers, this is unmanly; come with me and we'll talk over matters."

"You will withdraw your charge, Miss Malcolm?"

She drew herself up and said firmly:

"Mr. Rossmore, were it for myself, yes, for I

do not fear my unfortunate brother, cruel as he has been to me and wicked beyond all conception."

"It is for others that I refuse to withdraw my determination to let the law take its course."

"I have spared him before, I have been merciful, but he disregards all, and in sending him to prison, yes, perhaps to the gallows, I but save the life of those most dear to me, my father and my uncle."

"Roger Malcolm has gone too far and he must suffer the penalty, so I say to you, sir, deliver him up to the authorities in the village."

Her face was livid, her lips quivering; but her eyes flashed and there was resolution to keep her word stamped upon every feature.

The beautiful, gentle girl was at bay to save those she loved from her own brother.

"May! Sister!" cried the man seeing that he had aroused her to determined action.

"Silence, Roger Malcolm! do not appeal to me, for I swear to you that I am merciless."

"Mr. Rossmore, will you do as I ask, or shall I call the servants to carry my brother to the village jail?"

"I will obey your bidding, Miss Malcolm, for your brother seems far worse than I thought."

"Come, you must go with me, Malcolm."

"Will you thus repay the past, Regis Rossmore?" said Roger Malcolm.

"I will do all I can for you, Malcolm; but you must go."

"Come! don't force me to use this," and he drew from his pocket a pistol.

"May Malcolm, I am not yet hanged, so beware!" savagely said the wicked man, turning upon her a look of intense hatred.

She made no reply and Rossmore led him from the parlors, and, with his arm locked in his started down the gravel drive toward the highway.

"Well?" said the prisoner, as they got out of sight of the mansion.

"What made you do such a thing, Rogers?"

"You know my name now, so call me by it."

"Well, Malcolm, why did you go there after your sister?"

"I wanted money, and I do not care to be lectured."

"I saw the look you gave me and heard your words."

"What do you intend to do?"

"For the sake of the past let you go."

"I need money."

"How much?"

"All I can get."

"I will give you a few hundred, Malcolm, on conditions."

"I accept no conditions."

"Very well; I'll give you nothing but your freedom."

"Hold on; don't say that, for I have but ten dollars to my name, for this rig I have on took all I had."

"I must have money."

"What is the smallest sum that will do you?"

"I want five thousand dollars."

"You are a fool, Malcolm."

"You have it."

"I have not."

"Well, you are trying to marry rich, or you would not be visiting the rich heiress, Miss Regis."

"They told me a young artist expected to carry off that prize, and it threw me out, for I intended to get some money and play French count to marry her myself."

"Malcolm, you certainly are a most delightful villain."

"Thank you for nothing, Artist Rossmore, but I want money."

"How much can you do with, for I certainly wish to help you."

"A thousand now."

"You will not come here again?"

"No, I'll make my demands through you."

"Ah!"

"Yes, that will be better, or that little spitfire-sister of mine will hang me."

"She hinted that she could do so; but I will see after a while if I cannot arrange an income for you, when I have a talk with your father."

"May got her firmness from him, so don't try."

"Leave it to me; but in the mean time I will give you a thousand dollars, when we reach the hotel in the village—no, you had better go into yonder woods and await my return, and I will bring it to you."

"Then I must tell a story, and say that you escaped from me."

"Will that hurt you, Rossmore?"

"I'd rather be truthful; but await me yonder."

"All right," and the two parted.

Half-an-hour after Regis Rossmore was back again, and he had the money promised.

It was nearly dark, and Roger Malcolm said: "As you forgot to bring me a horse or a carriage, I will borrow a boat from yonder pretty house."

"Yes, there is a very pretty yacht, I see, which one man can handle, and I am a good sailor."

"Then, the craft will bring a couple of hundred in the city."

"Good-by, Rossmore, and thank you for not going back upon an old pard."

"What is your address, by the way?"

"You may address me to this village, and should I be away my letters will be forwarded; but remember, I am not to be fleeced by you, but I will do all I can."

"You can do more when you get the heir-ess," was the reply, with a rude laugh, and Regis Rossmore turned and walked away.

"I would see Miss Malcolm, Corks," he said, to the butler, and he entered the parlor.

When he had left the house with his prisoner, May Malcolm had sunk down upon a sofa almost fainting.

But she had rallied, and making her way to the dining-room had taken a glass of wine which had revived her.

Then she had gone back to her room and told Nellie the full story of her evil brother's life.

She had hidden nothing, and ended with: "Now, Nellie, you know that we have a skeleton in our closet too."

"You have my deepest sympathy, May, and I appreciate your confidence; but will you let the law take its course?"

"I must, so I will at once return home and report to my father."

"I will go with you; but where was it, I wonder, that Mr. Rossmore and your brother met?"

"I do not know, and Mr. Rossmore said that Roger had once saved his life."

Just then the butler announced:

"Mr. Rossmore to see Miss Malcolm."

"Come with me, Nellie, for you know all."

Down to the parlor they went, and Regis Rossmore seemed surprised to see Nellie; but May said:

"I have told Miss Regis all, Mr. Rossmore."

"Miss Malcolm, I have a confession to make to you," he said, in a low, earnest tone.

"Yes, Mr. Rossmore."

"You heard me say that I owed to your brother my life?"

"I did."

"He saved my life at the risk of his own, and so, feeling that it would be the best for you, for all, and not wishing to be the one to take him to prison, for he told me that you could send him to the gallows, I set him free."

"Thank God!" came in fervent tones from the lips of May Malcolm.

"It is better so."

"Yes, far better so," Nellie added.

"I am glad that you do not censure me, Miss Malcolm."

"And you gave him money, Mr. Rossmore?"

"A trifling sum."

"I will repay it to you."

"Under no consideration, Miss Malcolm, and you will hurt me if you refer to it again; but some day I wish to have a talk with your father about Malcolm, and he may come around all right."

"Never!"

"We can but try."

"Yes, and we will; and I thank you, Mr. Rossmore, with all my heart."

"Now let us forget what has occurred."

And she held out her hand to the young artist in a way that showed how glad she was that he had allowed her wicked brother to go free.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

PICKED UP AT SEA.

TRUE to his word, Roger Malcolm stole the little yacht from its anchorage off a handsome villa on the Sound, a mile distant from Sea Vale.

It was a pretty craft, sloop-rig, and of a couple of tons burden.

He went on board as soon as it was dark, and, to his delight, found that she had been stored for a short run, for there was a large tin box of provisions in the tiny cabin, some bedding and a cask of water on board.

"I think she will sell well in Boston, and she should bring me at least five hundred on a pinch."

"I'll head for Boston."

The tide was running out, and as he did not wish to set sail, for fear of being seen, he got up anchor, and let the yacht drift away into the Sound.

There he hoisted his jib and mainsail, and started for Boston.

He was, as he had said, a good sailor, and he knew the coast pretty well, having been forced to once serve on a coaster as a deck hand, and also cruised as a youth along the shores in a yacht with his father and Andrew Malcolm.

He had also, in other days, gone on cruises with Andrew, and thus had gotten to be a pretty fair seaman.

"I'll make Boston, with the wind holding as it does now, about to-morrow night, so I can stand the loss of sleep that long," he said.

The moon soon rose to light his way, and as the wind freshened, he went bowling along at an eight-knot rate.

It was just daybreak when he passed Montauk Light, but as he got the full force of the ocean breeze and sea, he was compelled to luff up and reef.

He had his breakfast out of the stores on

board, took a pull at a brandy flask, and then held on his way once more.

But as he got further along, he did not like the looks of the skies or sea.

The sky was darkening, and the sea seemed to be in sympathy with it.

He had held well out, wishing to pass to the leeward of Nantucket Island, and now began to feel sorry that he had not kept close inshore; but he had wished to avoid coasting vessels that might think it strange to see a little craft with one man on board.

The wind began to increase in violence until he was obliged to reef close.

With mainsail only, and this reefed down, he got along for a while quite well.

But the clouds grew blacker and blacker, the sea ran higher and the wind began to blow a gale.

"My God! I must lay to or go under," he cried, and he attempted to bring the yacht to.

But he was worn out with his hard work, a huge wave boarded over the stern and knocked him off his feet, and the mast broke off close with the deck.

Hastily he cut away the wreck, and then sunk down in the cockpit to await the result.

That result he feared would be death, and the life he had led came before him in all its vividness.

The wind had changed, and he was being driven out to sea, and he found that that he had not three days provisions.

Then it was that the wretched man began to bemoan his fate.

He had with him the money which had been given him by Regis Rossmore, and more of his own, which he had robbed an old gentleman of, though he had professed to have nothing.

That he should die with all this money with him was a fearful thought.

"If I was penniless and wretched it would not be so bad," he groaned.

Thus the day passed, the little yacht standing the rude buffets of the waves splendidly.

As the day passed on, the smoke of a steamer hove in sight, and Roger Rossmore saw that if she did not change her course she must pass near him.

Nearer and nearer she came until at last he was seen and the steamer stood down toward him.

He had not signaled her, for he had recognized the vessel.

It was the Vidette, the revenue cutter that Andrew Malcolm was in command of.

Soon he was taken on board the boat that was sent to his rescue, and the officer seeing that the yacht's hull was in perfect condition, said:

"We can tow your craft to port."

"You vas vera goot, monsieur; but it vas no matter," said Roger Malcolm, who was again pretending to be a Frenchman, hoping to deceive his brother.

"I vas ze tutor at ze home of a gentlemen, and go out for ze pleasant sail, so ze vinds blow me away," he explained.

"Well, we'll save your boat," and a line was attached and taken on board the cutter, the officer explaining the situation to Captain Malcolm, who at once invited the rescued man into his cabin.

"As I see that you have the Whisper there, sir, you must be a tutor at the Craddocks, for I know the little craft," said Andrew Malcolm.

"Yes, it vas ze home of ze Craddocks vere I lives, Monsieur le Capitaine," and Roger Malcolm was very uneasy.

Then Captain Malcolm arose and approached him.

"Sir, you are disguised, for this is a wig you wear, and—by Heaven! you are Roger Malcolm."

"I am, so what are you going to do about it, brother Andrew?" was the response.

"Roger, do we meet again after all your promises to leave the country after I last paid you the money you asked?"

"I was taken ill and robbed of the money, and so tried to earn money by teaching," was the ready lie.

"Where did you get that boat?"

"I borrowed it."

Andrew Malcolm was deeply moved.

He had aided Roger over and over again, helped him out of innumerable scrapes.

Now he said:

"Roger, you know that I know you as you are, and once more, and once only will I help you."

"I will believe your story about being ill and robbed, and that you are a tutor, for what else could have made you appear as you now do?"

"I will give you an outfit, one thousand dollars and the money to get a ticket from Boston to England."

"Then, if I hear of you again I shall be forced to act, and act I will, and you know I could be the witness against you in the case when you killed poor young Harding."

"Now, I do not wish to seem severe; but you must and shall leave this country."

"I am rich now in my own right, very rich, so it is not to get your inheritance from you that I wish you to leave."

"The amount you would have had your father has already spent on you, to save you from

prison, and my share, for he made me co-heir with May, I shall give to her, for my fortune is a large one, through my father, who has returned home."

"And yet you give me but a pittance of one thousand dollars?"

"Think of what I have given you, which your father and sister know nothing about."

"Call it two thousand and I'll go."

"I'll do it, upon the proviso that if you return to worry your father, May or myself, I will have you arrested."

"Agreed."

"Now, then, I will run into Newport and start you from there."

The order was given to head the cutter for Newport, and the next morning Roger Malcolm bade his cousin good-by, and promised to lead a different life.

Then he took the train for Boston to take the steamer there, but he did not leave the country, and laughed at the way he had fooled Captain Malcolm into giving him more money.

"My little shipwreck panned out pretty well, after all," he said, with a chuckle at his success.

"Now to work, dear Uncle Roger, for all I can get out of him, and I must see him before May or Andrew does, for they *might* give me away."

"I'll change my disguise and start for The Retreat."

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE SEA CHASE.

"My young friend, I wish to do all I can to save you, for somehow I believe your story," said the captain of the brig, when he heard that the barque was putting about as though to come in chase of him.

Then he gave the order to crowd all sail upon the brig, adding:

"I am not supposed to know that the barque is in chase, and if he catches the Widow McCree he's got a fast craft, indeed."

In the mean time the barque had begun the chase, for it had been decided that the prisoner was on board of her.

The detectives had arisen for breakfast, and, as their prisoner did not come out, one of them went to his state-room and knocked.

As there was no answer he tried the door.

But Damar had locked it and taken the key.

Loud knocking elicited no response, and the door was broken in.

Then it was seen that the prisoner was gone.

An alarm was given, search made, and the rope was found trailing out of the stern port.

Then it was remembered that the brig lay near during a part of the night, and it was felt that he had daringly made his escape by swimming to the other vessel.

"Put about at once, captain, and we'll take him," said Logan, the leader of the detective trio.

"A stern chase is a long one, Mr. Logan, and I cannot spare the time."

"I will pay you well, sir, I assure you."

The other detectives also urged, and the captain said:

"I will start in chase, but if I find I cannot overhaul the brig before night, I will give it up."

This was agreed to, and the barque was put about, all sail crowded upon her, and she went flying along in pursuit of the brig.

"We are gaining, but the brig sails well."

"Then this barque is a flyer and no mistake," the captain said, after half an hour's chase.

Thus the hours passed away until late in the afternoon, when the barque was but half a mile astern of the brig.

All signals had been unheeded by those on the brig; but that she had done her best to escape, those on the barque could see.

"It's no use, sir, for she will catch us by night," said the captain of the brig to Duke Damar.

"You have done well, captain, and I thank you."

"I will come to, sir, and refuse to give you up."

"Refuse, but do not resist, for I wish no trouble on my account."

"If they resort to force, I will give myself up."

The brig was now brought to, and the barque soon after came near, and the captain hailed:

"Ho the brig!"

"Ahoy the barque."

"We have been in chase of you."

"Why?"

"We believe you have a prisoner on board that escaped from our vessel last night, and swam to yours."

"I have one who escaped as you say and asks my protection."

"Do you intend to give him up?"

"If I refuse?"

"We treble you in force and shall board and take him, for I have officers of the law on my vessel, and I warn you not to resist."

"I will yield," and Duke Damar stepped from the companionway.

Then he called out:

"Send a boat aboard for me!"

A cheer came from on board the barque, and a boat was at once lowered, the three detectives coming in it.

As they boarded, Logan, whom his two comrades addressed as captain said:

"Captain, glance at these papers and you will see that my authority is all right."

The captain of the brig did glance at them and replied:

"I have nothing to say, sir, more than that I think you have made a mistake, for if this man is what you claim him to be, I am no judge of the human face."

"Good-by, Mr. Damar, and I hope you will come out all right."

Duke Damar wrung the captain's hand in farewell, again thanked him, and went over the side into the boat.

"You have gotten yourself into irons, sir, by last night's work," said Captain Logan, as the boat pulled back to the barque.

"You have the power, sir, so I yield," was the stern reply.

Ten minutes after, Duke Damar was in his state-room, iron chains upon his ankles and wrists, and the barque was again on her way toward the Pacific.

The run she made was a rapid one, and when she dropped anchor in San Francisco Harbor, Captain Logan went ashore to get quarters for them in the town, and to see what was best to be done.

The captain of the barque was paid for his services, and late that night a boat came off and the detective trio and their prisoner were rowed shoreward.

At the dock was a carriage, and entering it, the party was driven away.

"You are leaving the town, sir," said Duke Damar, as the vehicle rolled out of the city limits.

"Yes, we are going to quarters out of town for the present."

"Why not take me to the jail at once?"

"We do not care to have your capture known, for there are others to be taken yet."

Duke Damar made no reply, and after an hour's drive the vehicle drew up at a ranch situated in a wild region of country.

Here the party left the vehicle, and Damar found himself in a small room where he was told that he could retire.

He was still manacled, but being tired out went to bed and was soon sleeping soundly.

The next day he was well cared for, and in the evening the Captain Logan told him that he would be compelled to take him to Cheyenne.

"To Cheyenne?" asked Damar, in amazement.

"Such are my orders."

"I thought I was to be tried for a murder committed in San Francisco?"

"So I supposed, sir, and I find that the murder was committed when you were stationed at Fort Forward."

"I cannot understand this, sir."

"It was my mistake, sir, by having orders to take you to San Francisco."

"We start to-night, sir, by stage, and will go through all right."

"If you are quiet and give us no trouble, we will go by regular stage; but if you try and create a disturbance, I will take a stage for our party and will have to keep you heavily ironed."

"I am in your hands, sir, and have no desire to give you trouble."

"I have written my lawyers to meet me in San Francisco, as you know, and I must now write to have them come on to Cheyenne."

"I will mail the letter at once, sir, and have pen, ink and paper brought you here."

"You are doubtless doing your duty, Detective Logan; but you will find that in my arrest you have made a great mistake, for I am not the man you are in search of."

"I hope you will be able to prove that at the trial, sir."

"But we must be off within a short while, and if we find stage-coaching too hard for us, we will get horses and take it more easily, for there is no hurry."

"No hurry, Detective Logan?"

"No, sir."

"There may not be for you and your comrades, who are paid for your time; but for me, accused of murder, there is reason for hurry, and I fret at the long delay of a sea voyage, and then this unpardonable mistake that causes us to go from here to Cheyenne, before I am brought before my accusers."

"Yes, sir, there is hurry, and I beg of you not to delay," and the voice of Duke Damar rung with anger.

Half an hour after, the prisoner and the detective trio were seated in a stage on the Overland trail, bound eastward.

CHAPTER L.

CARDS WELL PLAYED.

TRUE to his word, Roger Malcolm made his way to the neighborhood of his boyhood's home, The Retreat.

That home which he had dishonored by his evil career.

Disguising himself as a countryman, he went

to an obscure inn near The Retreat, and sent a note for his uncle to come and see an old friend who was in distress.

Never deaf to such an appeal, Roger Malcolm mounted his horse and rode into town.

He was ushered into "Mr. Rogers's" room, and saw a young man instead of an old one.

Upon his face was the stamp of dissipation and sin.

"You do not know me, Uncle Roger?"

"Great God! can you be my poor brother's boy, the son of the woman I loved, the one whom Andrew has told me he has utterly cast off forever?" cried Roger Malcolm, senior, with anger, pity and disgust in look and voice.

"I am that unfortunate young man, sir; but I have reformed, and so have come to get you to help me lead a good life."

The old man gazed fixedly at the young one, and the eyes of the latter quailed beneath his gaze.

He seemed to be trying to recall something in the scamp's face.

At last he said:

"You have been a bad boy, Roger."

"A little wild, sir."

"Well, call it so; but I have heard serious charges against you."

"All wind, sir, for my father is an old fool and cannot, like a man of the world, such as you have been, understand how a young man can be a trifle wild."

"Tell me your story of your life, Roger," said the old man, in a kindly tone.

It was given, and Roger Malcolm, junior, made himself act almost angelic in character.

"Well, well, how you have been misunderstood and abused, my boy."

"I have indeed, sir," and Roger, jr., wept.

"Now what do you wish me to do?"

"I would like to go far away, sir, and begin life anew, for if I had a few thousand I could go into business, and I could win a name of honor, and father would be ashamed of himself in the end, for the way he has treated me, while May, who has snubbed me, and Andrew who has been most unkind, would find out their mistake."

"How would you like cattle-raising?"

"The very thing, sir, for I understand it."

"You did not speak of having been West?"

"I forgot that, sir."

"Where were you, for I wish to see that you get justice?"

"I was ranching out on the Overland, or that is, I was cowboy for a cattle-man."

"Did you like it?"

"Above all things, sir."

"Have you any money now?"

"None, sir, other than a few dollars I earned at hard labor."

"Well, my son, I will tell you what I will do."

"Yes, sir."

"I will come in to-morrow to see you, and will bring you a letter to a friend of mine out West."

"You will find him at Cheyenne, and by a talk with him he will decide as to the best place for you to settle, and all the money, that is within limit, you know, he will advance you on my order."

"It would take well up, Uncle Roger, to start a ranch."

"Yes, it could not be done well under ten thousand dollars; but I am a rich man, and long ago would have supplied you handsomely had I thought you the good fellow you say you are."

"Thank you, Uncle Roger, and would you give me a letter to some clergyman in Cheyenne?"

"My acquaintance with the clergy, my dear boy, is somewhat limited; but my friend there will introduce you to those you ought to know."

"You are so good, sir."

"I am acting from a sense of justice and duty, Roger."

"But to-morrow I will see you."

"Don't speak a word to father, sir."

"No, indeed, nor to May."

"She is not at home."

"How did you know that?"

"I asked, sir," said the scamp, choking back the lie.

"Well, I guess two hundred in cash will be enough to get you to Cheyenne?"

"I need more clothes, sir, and will be glad if you make it a little more."

"Well, I will make it three hundred, and will be here to-morrow."

And the next day Roger Malcolm was as good as his word, and saw his nephew leave town, armed with a letter to his friend in Cheyenne, and with three hundred dollars in his pocket.

"The letter says to give me all I need, so it's worth while going out West again for."

"Yes, I'll get a cool ten thousand, and that, with what I have, I can go ahead on and catch some rich wife."

"Ha! ha! I have played my cards well."

CHAPTER LI.

LINK BY LINK.

AFTER parting with his sinful adopted brother, Captain Malcolm ordered the yacht to be

refitted and put in perfect trim at his expense, and then delivered to the owners, for he could not get it out of his head that Roger Malcolm had stolen it.

Then he set sail for Providence, where the cutter would have to undergo repairs for a couple of weeks, and during the time he intended to give himself a holiday.

Letters at Providence told him that May was visiting at Sea Vale Hall, and so he went to the village, secured comfortable quarters and was about to start for a visit to Sea Vale when the landlord told him of Regis Rossmore and brought the two young men together.

"Accept a seat with me in my buggy, for I am going over now," said the artist, and the young sailor gladly consented.

On the way Regis Rossmore deemed it his duty to make known the scene that had occurred at Sea Vale with Roger Malcolm, telling him that he feared the man might not keep his word and leave the country.

Andrew was deeply pained to find out how he had been deceived, and said that he would at once send a detective upon his track.

Then he told Regis Rossmore how he had picked him up at sea and what had occurred.

"I will drive you back at once, Captain Malcolm, so that you can send an officer after him, for I believe that he will do some harm yet to your father or sister, in his determined effort to get money."

So back to the village they went, and an officer was at once dispatched to Newport to go upon the track of Roger Malcolm from there.

The artist then drove the sailor out to Sea Vale, and a warm welcome was extended to them.

That evening Andrew Malcolm took May aside and told her what he knew about Roger.

"And more, May, I will now tell you all that I do know about him, how I have secretly helped him time and again, and I wish you to tell the truth, for if he has not left the country, he must not be allowed to do further evil, be he what he may to us."

Astonished at the depth of her brother's infamy, May then told who it was that had attempted to rob their home, and who had killed the nurse.

"I shall leave for The Retreat to-morrow, May, and place the whole matter before my father, for it is best that your good father, in his ill-health, should not be worried in the matter."

The next day Captain Malcolm left for The Retreat.

To his delight he met his father in town, and they went to a room in the hotel to have a talk together.

To his father the young captain told all that he knew of Roger's villainies, and Mr. Malcolm listened in silence.

"Here is a telegram I had for you, and I thought by that that you were coming, my son," said Andrew Malcolm, quietly, and the captain was surprised at his father's indifference to the story he had heard.

"It is from my man, and says:

"I traced him to Boston: thence took ticket for D—."

"Will follow on train."

"He has come here, then?"

"He has been here, my son, two days ago and has gone."

"You saw him?"

"Yes."

"He imposed on you?"

"Andrew, I have lived too long to be thoroughly taken in by a villain."

"I heard his story, and I wished to help him if he meant to do good, so I sent him out to Cheyenne with a letter to a friend of mine there."

"I wrote another letter, though, by a detective who went on the same train, and that said to keep the young man there with various excuses, until a party called to see him, and then to act according to what that visitor said was best to be done."

"Now that I have heard your story I will write again, giving full facts, so leave our interesting kinsman in my hands, and do not speak to my brother about it."

"By no means, sir, and I feel that in your hands all will be well."

"Now, let us go home, and your uncle will be as glad to see you as I am," and they started for The Retreat in the family carriage in which Roger Malcolm had come into town.

In the mean time Roger Malcolm, Jr., was flying westward on the train.

His vicious, cruel heart was happy at his success, and he saw a chance to get quite a little fortune in his hands before long.

It was his custom to drink deeply, and so when a quiet-looking fellow-passenger on board asked him to join him in a glass of brandy from his private flask, he readily consented.

The ice thus broken, the two became quite chummy.

"Whither going, pard?" said Roger.

"To Cheyenne."

"So am I. Shake!"

They shook, and were inseparable from that time until they left the stage at Cheyenne.

Roger's friend said that his name was Grim, and that he was out on a "prospecting trip."

"We'll be pards, for I'm prospecting, too."

Then Roger presented his letter, was well received, and given every encouragement.

"You'll have to wait for me for some days, before I can go with you to look around, but then I'll be at your service," said Roger Malcolm, senior's, friend, who answered to the name of Herndon.

Roger was very willing to wait, for the hotel was not a bad one, the whisky was not of the vilest, and gambling was good.

Thus passed ten days, and Colonel Marsden said that he was ready to go.

Then he found that Roger Malcolm had lost all his money in gambling and had none to pay his hotel bill or buy a horse and outfit.

Roger was very persistent, and the money was supplied him, while his friend Grim also went along.

"Do you intend to go by Fort Forward?" asked Roger, when they took the trail in that direction.

"Yes; but have you ever been out here before?"

"Oh, no; but I have talked so much with the boys about the country that I know it quite well."

"I see," said Colonel Marsden.

Roger urged that it would be best to go in another direction, but the colonel knew best, and so on they went until one night they halted at Hank's Ranch.

The colonel was well known to Hank, and there were others present who were introduced, and soon after Colonel Marsden invited all to his room, which was in an outer cabin, to enjoy a little game he said.

They had not been long there before loud voices were heard, then a couple of pistol-shots, and afterward all was quiet.

The next morning early Colonel Marsden and Mr. Grim started back on the trail to Cheyenne.

Arriving there, Mr. Grim took the stage eastward until they reached the railroad, and there he bought a ticket for a town in Connecticut.

Upon arriving at his destination Mr. Grim took horse for The Retreat farm.

He asked to see Mr. Roger Malcolm, and when that gentleman entered the parlor he greeted him cordially.

"Back again? Glad to see you."

"Any news?"

"Much, sir."

"My nephew is here, detained by repairs on his vessel which have taken much longer to do than he expected."

"He is in the secret with me, so I'll call him."

In a few moments Mr. Malcolm returned with his nephew and presented him to Mr. Grim.

"Now, Mr. Grim."

"Well, sir, I went West on the same train with the party, made his acquaintance over a flask of brandy, and we became good friends."

"I presented my credentials to Colonel Marsden before he did his, so we understood each other."

"The colonel communicated with General Cook of the Rocky Mountain Detectives, and he sent a man to meet us at Hank's Ranch."

"We, the colonel, the party I shadowed and myself took the trail; but as the party had lost his money gambling the colonel had to pay his hotel bill and buy a horse and outfit for him."

"We found the Rocky Mountain Detectives at the ranch, and also Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill from the fort as you suggested, so they were sent for."

"Then the colonel sprung his trap, told his story as heard from you, and that you were sure that the prisoner was one of the road-agents who stopped the coach the day you were on it, and was robbing you, and you wished to see if Surgeon Powell did not recognize him, and Buffalo Bill, who knew many of the road-agents."

"If so he was to be turned over to the Rocky Mountain Police."

"The party, sir, was recognized by the surgeon, the chief of scouts, Captain Cody, and by others, and Colonel Marsden said that he should turn him over to the Rocky Mountain Detectives for trial."

"At this, sir, the party drew a revolver and fired at the colonel; but as all rushed toward him he turned his pistol upon himself and pulled trigger."

"Did he kill himself?" asked Mr. Malcolm quickly.

"He did, sir, for the bullet passed through his brain."

"And then, sir?"

"He was decently buried, sir, over in the ranch graveyard."

"It is better so; better by his own hand than the gallows," said Captain Malcolm sadly.

"Yes; his end was better than he deserved, and I will have Marsden write my brother a letter saying that his son was killed and buried there, and he need know no more, and Marsden will do it for we were old pards together years ago."

"And May, father?"

"She will have to know all; but she is brave, and will stand it like the brave girl that she is."

"Now, Mr. Grim, your bill, please?" and Mr. Malcolm turned to the detective.

"Here are all expenses, sir."

"You have done well, and I will write you a check at once, and please speak to no one about this affair."

"I will not, sir."

May heard the news in silence, for Andrew Malcolm went by Sea Vale on his way to his vessel, and a month after a letter came to Roger Malcolm's father telling him that his son had been killed out on the border, and his body had been decently buried, while the few things he possessed had been sent home.

"It is better the bullet than the rope, Roger, for it would have come to that," was what the father said on reading the letter, and from that day the outcast son was never spoken of in the Malcolm home.

CHAPTER LII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

Now let me return to the fort in the far West, with my kind reader, where Buffalo Bill was patiently awaiting the convalescence of the assistant surgeon, so that the Surgeon Scout might accompany him in his effort to run the road-agents to earth, discover his Double and solve the mystery of the Specter of the Canyon.

It was weeks before Surgeon Powell was able to leave the fort, and then, just as he was preparing to depart with Buffalo Bill, a letter came from General Cook, chief of the Rocky Mountain Detective League, asking them both to be at Hank's Ranch at a certain date.

"We can just make it, Frank, and then we will start upon our special trail," Buffalo Bill said.

"Wonder what the Rocky Mountain Chief wants?" Powell remarked.

"Don't know; but now to plan for our trip."

"We go alone?"

"Yes, but we are to have reserves."

"How is that?"

"I have an idea that when we unearth these knights of the trail, we will need aid to bag them."

"Yes."

"There may be but half a dozen, and they may number a score."

"True."

"Now I wish five of my best men—"

"Scouts?"

"Yes, my men; I want them to go to the Lost Canyon, entering by the southern pass, and go into camp there, and await us."

"Any more?"

"Yes, I would like to have Captain Will Brown start the day after the scouts, the latter to leave the day after we go, and to carry with him two scouts and twenty men."

"I begin to see through the millstone, Bill."

"The captain and his men are also to go to the Lost Canyon, covering up their trail, and go into camp."

"This will give us twenty-eight men, with the captain, seven scouts, and twenty soldiers, besides ourselves, thirty all told."

"On the ridge at this end of the canyon, I wish a man, a scout kept on watch, and with signals."

"From there he can see the hilltop over old Lone Dick's Canyon, and he must keep watch on it constantly."

"You or I can go to the hilltop and wave a red flag three times, the scout can turn and signal down into the Lost Canyon, and the soldiers can cross the ridge and get to us within the hour."

"Bill, you are a trump," cried the surgeon.

"If at night, a lantern will do, and so, day or night, we can get a ready support if we need any, while no one will suspect the presence of cavalry and scouts in the Lost Canyon."

"It is just the place, so let us see the colonel and Captain Brown, have him pick his men, you pick yours, and we will get off at once."

"All right, Surgeon Powell, and we'll go loaded for bear," said Buffalo Bill, with a light laugh.

The next morning they rode out of the fort followed by a pack-horse with all camp equipment and an animal that would come in well should either of those they rode meet with an accident.

It was late in the afternoon when they reached Hank's Ranch, and they found there General Cook, the chief of the Rocky Mountain Detectives.

He knew both Surgeon Powell and the chief of scouts, and greeted them pleasantly, while he said:

"I sent for you by courier, as I had word from my old friend Colonel Marsden, of Cheyenne that he would be here with a prisoner whom you would doubtless recognize as a former road-agent."

"It seems he has been carrying a high hand East, and somehow an old Californian, Roger Malcolm, got on his track, recognized him as one who held up a coach he was in when you rescued them, Powell along with that poor fel-

low Damar, and if you remember him I will soon see that he is tried and sentenced, and I can guess what the sentence will be, for all of these knights are murderers."

"This is why I asked you to be here, gentlemen."

It was not long after before Colonel Marsden and his two comrades arrived, and the story of Grim, the detective, told to Mr. Malcolm and his son, made known how Roger Malcolm was entrapped, his crimes link by link connected, and how, to escape the doom that he knew awaited him, in desperation he took his own life.

After the burial of the suicide's body Colonel Marsden set out on his return to Cheyenne accompanied by Grim, the detective, and General Cook and his Secret Service men returned to their headquarters in Denver.

But Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell remained at the ranch, for that was to be their starting-point to carry out the good work before them.

"Anything new on the line of late, Hank?" asked Buffalo Bill, after the detectives had departed.

"Not much, though there has been a stage or two held up o' late."

"Where?"

"Nigh whar you made your rescue that day, Surgeon Powell."

"Much damage done, Hank?"

"Waal, a pilgrim were kilt, a horse or two hurted, and some dust got from ther inside o' ther hearse whar it were hid."

"Who was the driver?"

"Ribbon Moses."

"Many agents in the gang?"

"Ribbon Moses said as how he seen seven."

"Any other hold-ups?"

"One jist arter thet, but thar was a empty hearse and no dust, so ther knights got nothin'."

"Who was the driver?"

"Ike Holt."

"Many knights?"

"Thirteen, he said, and they was wolfish when they got nothin', laid it on Ike as ther cause, tuk his clothes, and with ther bucket o' tar fer ther wheels and some game they had shot and picked they treated him to a suit o' clothin' thet he were not happy in when he arrove here."

"Where was this?"

"A few miles beyond whar ther t'other hold-up were."

"Heard or seen my Double, Hank?"

"I hain't, since he tuk ther stage for ther East."

"Hank, do you know your men here pretty well?"

"I guess."

"You trust them all?"

"Pard Bill, I hain't doin' too much trustin' nowadays."

"You remember my pard, Mustang Jack, who was here with me last?"

"Yas."

"Well, can you tell me if he was pards with any one about your place when he was here?"

"Wal, he were a leetle sociable with a feller I calls Careless Kit, fer he are the carelestest pilgrim I ever seen."

"One of your cattle-men, is he not?"

"Yas, Bill."

"Well, Hank, we start back to the fort in the morning, and I wish you would let the fact be known in an easy way."

"Yes, Bill."

"And see that Careless Kit hears it early, and don't let any one know that we wish it known, Hank."

"I understands, Bill," and some one calling to Landlord Hank from the main cabin, he walked away.

"Now, Frank, we are to keep an eye on Master Careless Kit."

"You think he and Mustang Jack were pards?"

"A mere surmise; but I'll bet you a new rifle that Careless Kit leaves the ranch within an hour after he hears we start for the fort to-morrow."

"Bill, you should be called the Lawyer Scout, for you have a great head," said Frank Powell, with a laugh.

CHAPTER LIII.

GRIZZLY GEORGE, THE GUIDE OF THE ROCKIES.

The detective trio, who had Duke Damar in their keeping, did not seem to be well pleased with stage-coach traveling.

There seemed to be too many inquisitive travelers going their way, and they got tired of answering questions about their prisoner.

"We will have to take to horseback," said Captain Logan one night, when they were at an Overland stage station, delayed by a storm.

"We'll go on to Salt Lake, and there get horses and a guide to take us to Cheyenne," he continued.

His comrades seemed to like the idea, and Duke Damar seemed to care but little how they went the rest of the way.

Arriving at Salt Lake Captain Logan carried out his plan.

He seemed to be well supplied with money, and he bought five good horses and an outfit.

The fifth horse was used as a pack-animal, and he carried a small tent, bedding, cooking utensils, and all that was needed for a journey and camping.

The detectives bought rifles, too, and then set off on their way under the guidance of a man who called himself Grizzly George.

He suited the name, too, for his hair and beard were as grizzly as a bear's, his skin looked like leather, and he had a small eye set away back under his brows, but it was piercing and full of fire.

He was over six feet in height, dressed in buckskin, and his frame was powerfully-built.

He had offered himself as guide when he had heard Captain Logan looking for a guide, and knowing the country from California to the Missouri, he was quickly engaged for the trip.

Grizzly George was a silent man, and the detectives seemed to stand in certain awe of him, for his word became law before they had been on their way a day.

He rode some distance in advance, selected the best trails and always knew the best camping-places.

At last they got into the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains, and he said in his quaint way:

"Horses need rest, so will stop day for hunt."

"What kind of game?" asked Logan.

"B'ar, deer, Rocky Mountain sheep, or anything yer want."

"We'll try a deer-hunt, then."

"All right, I'll find yer plenty of game, pard, for I knows a valley whar yer kin all stand and I'll drive ther deer right up ag'in' yer guns."

The next day the halt for rest was made, and the guide called to the detectives to come with him.

"Two of us will go."

"But thar is three passes 'out o' ther valley, and all should be guarded."

"But the prisoner?"

"He's got irons on him, so tie him to a tree."

This was decided upon, as the three detectives all wanted the sport, and the guide said they would not be long gone.

The guide took them to their separate stands, narrow passes at the head of the valley, and then said that he would make a circuit to the foot of the vale and drive the game up it, and they would all have a good chance to kill plenty of deer.

Ten minutes after, Grizzly George, panting from a long run, appeared in camp.

Duke Damar was seated against a tree to which he was bound with a lariat, and his hands and feet were both manacled.

"Pard, I hain't got no time ter talk; but I overheard a leetle bit o' conversation among these detectives, and it's goin' hard with you if they gits you whar they is takin' yer."

"I feels fer a human, an' so I sots yer free, fer yer don't look ther man ter do a mean act, and durn me if I don't think thar is some mistake. Here are ther keys o' yer irons, and I seen him leave 'em in his coat pocket, so jist let me unlock 'em. Thar, now you is O. K., so I'll lock 'em ag'in and they'll think you slipped 'em over yer hands and feet. Here are a leetle map I drew fer yer, and jist foller its instructions and it will take yer up to ther Overland stage-line which are some sixty mile from here. Thar yer kin catch a coach going east or west, as yer pleases. Thar's a extra rifle in ther tent, and wee-pins too, so take 'em, and fit yerself out with feed also. Ther hosses is over yonder, so take ther cap'n's, fer he are ther best one. Here are jist sixty-five dollars, all I kin spare, and if yer wishes ter return it ter me my name are Grizzly George, care o' Colonel Ned Marsden, Cayenne City, and it will reach me. Good-by, pard, and luck to yer, and you bet I won't lead 'em on yer trail."

With this the guide bounded away ere Duke Damar could utter a word of thanks.

He was free, however, had arms at his command, food, a horse, sixty-five dollars in money and a good start.

Duke Damar was stiff from his having been so long in irons, and yet he must exert himself.

Going into the tent he put the keys back into the pocket of Logan's coat, found the rifle, belt of arms, hastily gathered what food he could lay his hands upon, and then limped off to where the horses were staked out.

The captain's was the best animal, and he was quickly saddled and bridled.

Then mounting he started on the back trail, just as some shots far down in the valley told him that Grizzly George was at work driving the game up for the three detectives to shoot.

CHAPTER LIV.

A GRIZZLY AND HIS NAMESAKE.

CONTRARY to their wishes, Grizzly George did "jump" a bear down in the valley, and the detectives were not long in finding it out.

He had, after having released Duke Damar, run rapidly back to the other end of the valley.

There he had fired his rifle to let the trio know he was starting the game.

Having done this he sat down to rest, giving an occasional yell and firing a shot or two.

Having fully rested himself, he started up the valley, when he heard the detectives open fire.

As he neared the head of the valley, he heard a wild shriek.

Then a savage roar, followed by cries of fright and agony commingled.

Instantly he ran forward, and upon reaching the nearest pass saw one of the detectives lying lifeless upon the ground, while a huge grizzly bear stood over him.

Up a tree were the other two detectives, emptying their rifles upon the huge brute.

Grizzly George had seen just such sights before.

"Quit yer shootin', pards, fer yer is only makin' him mad," he called out.

The grizzly heard the voice of his namesake and turned upon him.

But Grizzly George walked deliberately on.

Then up went his rifle, there was a shot, a roar, another shot, a roar and a rush, and then the man pumped the lead into the beast until he fell dead within ten feet of him.

"You kin come down now, pards," said the guide, quietly, and he added:

"And bury your pard."

"Is he dead?" cried Logan, anxiously.

"It were a grizzly as had him," was the reply, as though the question was a foolish one.

Up to the man went the guide and bent over him.

"Every bone in his body are broke, not ter speak o' his neck."

"I'll skin ther b'ar, pards, and git some choice bits of meat off of ther deer, while you digs a grave fer yer poor friend."

Sadly the two detectives agreed to this, and they bore the body to camp.

"Where in thunder is the prisoner?" yelled Captain Logan, and in their amazement and alarm the two dropped the body.

Then they yelled for the guide, and he came running, as though he expected to have to kill another bear.

"The prisoner has escaped!" shouted Logan.

"Yer don't say so?"

"Yes, he has slipped those irons over his small hands and feet, untied the rope and gone."

"He's got the extra weapons, cap'n," yelled the other detective from the tent.

"And my horse," shouted Logan a moment after. "Come, let us mount and pursue."

"Hold on, pards."

"What for?"

"Waal, yer has a dead pard ter plant, a b'ar ter skin, some fresh meat ter git and ter break up camp, fer ef yer goes on ther trail o' thet young feller yer must go loaded and not hev ter come back."

"Well, we'll do all and come after you, if you will go after him."

"I'll do it; wait right here and I'll j'ine yer."

"All right, go at once."

And Grizzly George went at once; but after riding a couple of miles staked his horse out and laid down to rest.

Several hours after he awoke and returned to camp.

"Couldn't catch him, pards," coolly said the guide.

"Then we will go on, strike the Overland near Hank's Ranch, if you know where that is, and from there we know the way to Fort Forward, and will pay you off and let you go."

"All right, pards," was the reply of the guide, and they pressed on at once, as they had several hours before night.

They did not suspect the guide of treachery, but for reasons of their own they wished to get rid of him when they were near Hank's Ranch.

CHAPTER LV.

THE TIRELESS TRAILERS.

"I've won my rifle, Frank," said Buffalo Bill, as the two friends saw Careless Kit mount his horse and ride away from the ranch.

"You have indeed; but will you follow him?"

"No. I will start for the fort to-morrow, and while you ride on alone after we get some distance away, I will make a cut for the head of Lone Dick's Canyon."

"What for?"

"Well, my idea is that Careless Kit is in league with the Knights. He has gone to inform them that we start for the fort to-morrow."

"So I believe."

"They will ambush us."

"Well?"

"As before it is my opinion that the Indian girl will be on the trail."

"To warn us?"

"Yes, and you can heed her warning, and then await for me at the camp where I killed Mustang Jack and the deserter."

"And you, Bill?"

"She will return the same way, and not knowing that I am in hiding, right where we have before lost her trail, I can see which way she goes."

"The very thing, and I will tell her that you remained behind."

"Yes, and when I find her trail, then I will come to you and we will decide what is best to be done."

After a good breakfast the next morning, Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell started on the trail for the fort.

After a ride of a mile or two, Buffalo Bill said:

"I'll leave you here, Frank, and make for the head of Lone Dick's Canyon."

"If you should not meet the girl, then I will join you to-night at the camp, and if you do, as soon after I find where she goes as I can."

Thus they parted, and Surgeon Powell rode quietly along on the trail.

"There's the girl," he said, as he came in sight of her an hour after.

She was mounted upon her white pony and calmly awaiting him.

As he drew near, she said:

"Where is the white chief, Buffalo Bill?"

"He remained behind. I had to go on, so left him," was the reply.

"You must turn from this trail, there is danger ahead."

"An ambush?"

"Yes."

"Shall I take the trail I did before?"

"Yes, but do not do as before and attempt to surprise your foes, for there is an ambush both ways."

"Ah! I thank you."

"Will the scout come to-morrow?"

"No, not for some days."

"Good-by."

With this she rode away at a gallop, leaving the scout to come slowly on behind.

She soon distanced Surgeon Powell, and after turning off from the trail, took the one leading to the Trapper's Canyon.

Before getting there she drew from a saddle-pocket a white gown, strangely resembling a shroud, and this she threw over her, completely enveloping her head and form.

Then at a slow pace she rode up the canyon. Lone Dick was seated in front of his cabin, and upon seeing her coming went down the canyon to meet her.

"Are there men in ambush, Lady Laura?" he asked.

"Yes. Ther chief's comin'. I got letter from ther tree on ther Overland awhile ago."

"What does he say?"

"Says he's comin', and to expect him any time arter I gets his letter."

"All right."

And the girl rode on, while Lone Dick returned to his cabin.

Through the canyon she made her way, and thence on to the stream in the hills where her trail had been lost before.

Into the stream she rode, and after going a hundred yards turned toward the bank where there was a thicket of small trees and what appeared to be a huge rock behind them.

The rock proved to be a dummy, being a cleverly-painted screen of which one end was raised and lowered to permit her to pass through.

Hardly had she passed beyond the painted board resembling a rock when she disappeared in a crevice in the cliff.

Perhaps ten minutes passed away after her disappearance when a form came out of a clump of underbrush and deliberately followed the path the maiden had taken.

It led into a canyon, the sides being wooded and which went at a decline to a vale some quarter of a mile away.

This vale was as secluded as one could wish and in the midst of overhanging hills, with rugged precipices on every side.

There, under the shadow of the cliffs, hidden by the dense timber, were several rude cabins.

A stream ran near, a meadow was dotted with two-score horses, and saddles and bridles hung about upon the trees.

"This, then, is the retreat of the Knights of the Trail, and, as I felt certain, the girl is in league with them. Now, to return and tell the surgeon of my discovery."

And Buffalo Bill retraced his way to where he had left his horse, and, mounting, rode around the Hermit's Canyon to the camp where Frank Powell awaited him.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE SIGNALS.

WHEN Buffalo Bill went to the camp, where he had told Surgeon Powell he would join him, he found his comrade on the watch for him, for it was night when he reached there.

"Well, Bill, good news, I hope," said the surgeon.

"I know the retreat of the Knights."

"Good."

Then Buffalo Bill told how he had made the discovery, and the Surgeon Scout asked:

"How many of them?"

"I counted forty-one horses, and judge there may be fifteen men."

"Can you get at them easily?"

"Without any trouble, and they feel so safe they do not keep a guard."

"I see; well, I made a discovery, too."

"What was it?"

"I saw the girl, and she warned me of a double ambush."

"Then she rode on, and anxious to see the hill where our signal-man must stay, I went to it."

"To my surprise it gave me a view up the canyon where the old trapper lives."

"As I looked I saw the girl ride into sight."

"She was two miles away, but I turned my

giass on her, saw her halt and put on a white covering of some kind.

"Then she moved on up the canyon, stopped at the trapper's and had a talk with him, after which she went on her way."

"This is news, Frank, for it shows that Lone Dick is also in league with the Knights, and this I would not have believed."

"Nor I, though I thought his actions a little curious. Will you go on to the Lost Canyon to-night?"

"No, there is no hurry now, so we will camp here, and by to-morrow Captain Brown and all will be there."

The two daring men then retired to rest, unmindful of danger; but they were up bright and early and on their way to the Lost Canyon.

The seven scouts and Captain Brown and his twenty cavalymen had arrived and gone into camp.

A consultation was then held, and Buffalo Bill gave all their instructions.

"You, Buck and Thorn are to go to the hill-top over the Trapper's Canyon, and you are to leave your horses hereso as to have no trail."

"Harry Moore, you and Sands must go to the hill yonder, and you are to each stand your watch, and do not take your eyes off of the Trapper's Hill."

"If you see a red flag by day waved three times, or a lantern by night, you are to repeat the signal so that the man on watch here in the canyon can see it and give the alarm."

"Then, captain, you will break camp and ride with all speed to the Trapper's Canyon."

"Buck, you and Thorn are to keep watch on the ridge beyond the Trapper's Canyon, where there is a cliff jutting out from the side and among the trees."

"If we need you, either Surgeon Powell or myself will appear on that cliff and wave a flag."

"Then you are to repeat the signal to Harry and Sands, and when they answer, you are to make your way down to the foot of Trapper's Canyon, and Captain Brown will have your horses and pick you up as he comes along with his men."

"And you, Cody?" asked the young captain.

"Will meet you about the trapper's cabin, or at the head of the canyon, or if I do not, Surgeon Powell will."

"Now we leave to-night, and then the signalmen must go on duty so as to be at their posts by daybreak."

That afternoon the two scouts left the Lost Canyon, and made their way to the ridge back of the retreat of the Knights of the Trail.

For several days the watchers for a signal saw no sign from the cliff; but one morning they saw a form appear there.

"It's Surgeon Powell, for I see his uniform," said Buck, and then he added: "He's waving the signal."

"Thorn, you signal Harry and Sands."

This he quickly did, and then called out: "They see it, and are signaling the captain."

"Now for the lower end of the canyon, Buck," and they started down the hill where they had so faithfully done their duty.

About the time they left the hill, a horseman rode leisurely into the Trapper's Canyon.

It was Buffalo Bill.

Trapper Dick saw him coming, and went down to meet him.

"Ho, Bill, is it you or your Double?"

"It is me, Lone Dick, and you are my prisoner. Move and you die!"

The words were spoken in deadly earnest and a revolver covered the trapper.

"Is yer jokin', Buffalo Bill?"

"Hands up, sir, or die!"

The trapper obeyed, and the scout threw a lariat over his hands and tied them firmly.

"What's this fer, Bill?"

"Only a little joke of mine, Lone Dick."

"Ah! here come my friends," and up the canyon dashed Captain Brown and his men.

They had picked Buck and Thorn up at the other end of the canyon and came on with a rush, their horses covered with foam.

"Take this man up behind, one of you, and come on," cried the scout, and on they dashed.

At the head of the canyon Surgeon Powell awaited them, and they pressed rapidly on by the hidden trail into the valley where the Knights had their retreat.

Up to the cabins they swept, and the two men there were quickly captured, while a young and beautiful woman stood in the door of the hut standing apart and said:

"At last! I knew this would end some day."

"Captain Brown, please leave two of your men here to guard these two outlaws, Lone Dick and the lady," said Buffalo Bill.

Then the order was given to ride on, and the party dashed away along the mountain-path, leading to the Overland stage-trail.

The woman, unseen by the soldier guards, slipped out of the back window of the cabin, sprung upon a horse feeding in the timber and followed after the soldiers.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE DOUBLE SURPRISE.

WHEN Duke Damar escaped from the camp of the detectives, through the aid of Grizzly

George, he followed the directions on the map, and in a couple of days reached the Overland Trail, and awaited a coach.

At last it came, he halted it, and with his horse hitched behind, mounted with the driver.

At the next station he sold his horse for a fair price, and continued on his way.

At last he drew near Hank's Ranch station.

He was the only passenger, and the driver was unknown to him.

Feeling tired he took an inside seat and had sunk to sleep when suddenly the coach was halted.

Looking out he saw some soldiers and Buffalo Bill at their head.

"Driver, you have passengers with you?" said Buffalo Bill.

"One pilgrim inside, Pard Bill."

"Ah! it is the man I want. Duke Damar, I have orders for your arrest."

"What, Cody! am I still to suffer persecution?" said the young soldier.

Ere a reply could be made a horseman suddenly sprung out of a thicket, and at his back were a score of soldiers and scouts.

It was Buffalo Bill and his followers.

Buffalo Bill was face to face with his Double.

Both men fired, but the scout shot the quickest, and his bullet lodged in his Double's heart.

The soldiers and scouts also opened a warm fire upon the Knights of the Trail, who were disguised as soldiers.

But the fight was of short duration, and so true had been the aim there was little work for Surgeon Powell to do.

"At last! at last! I knew it must come," and a fair form glided to the side of the wounded chief of the outlaws, at whose side stood Buffalo Bill, Surgeon Powell and Captain Brown and Duke Damar, while the scouts and soldiers were looking to the prisoners and dead.

"What a resemblance to you, Cody!" said Captain Brown.

"It is marvelous," Surgeon Powell said.

"Will I die, sir?" and the wounded chief spoke to the Surgeon Scout, who, after a quick examination of his wound, said:

"You are dying now."

"Who are you?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Your Double," and the dying man smiled.

Then he turned his eyes upon Duke Damar.

"Would you know me, Duke Damar, for I might as well tell all now?"

"Yes, who are you?"

"Eva, throw off my disguise," and he addressed the woman.

"Regis Rossmore! my God!" broke from the lips of Duke Damar.

The wig of long black hair, the perfect-fitting mustache and imperial had been removed, and Regis Rossmore was revealed, every feature startlingly like Buffalo Bill.

"Regis Rossmore, for Heaven's sake, explain what this means," cried Duke Damar.

"It means, Damar, that I was reared by a mother who was a wicked woman, and who is now known as Mrs. Regis, your father's sister."

"She was married twice, secretly at first, and I am her son, and Lone Dick is my father."

"My father committed a crime that caused him to fly for his life, and my mother took me East and married again."

"She never had any more children, but adopted Nellie, whom she now claims as her daughter."

"She it was who sent me abroad to study art, and kept me out of the way."

"Upon my return I came West to get sketches to paint and met my father."

"He put me up to a great deal of devilry to get money, such as stage-robbing and horse-stealing, and tiring of it I went East to find that my mother had another game of sin for me to play. She it was, with my help, that forced your father to make the will that he did."

"I it was who fired at you with a pistol bearing Buffalo Bill's name, for I had already impersonated him."

"I did this to get rid of you, so that Nellie might get all, for I it was who killed Delancy Redfield, and—"

"Thank God!" came from Duke Damar's lips.

"I killed him, and Nellie perjured herself to save you, when she really believed you guilty."

"Determined to get you out of the way, I planned to have three of my men kidnap you."

"They were to get rid of you at sea."

"Their courage failed them, and so they started Overland with you, determined to bring you to me. They wrote me of their arrival, and so I started West. I got here two days ago to find that you had escaped from them, and they came on here and we halted the coaches to capture you."

"I knew that, disguised as Buffalo Bill, I could take you, and the Double was beaten in his game by the reality."

"This poor girl here I ask mercy for."

"She is my wife, and yet I meant to kill you, and then marry Nellie, thus getting all the fortune of your father."

"I would have deceived poor Eva, and also Nellie."

"Nellie believes she is really my wife, for I deceived her into a real marriage when she thought it was a mock one; but I married Eva two years ago, and she has clung to me in all my

wickedness, for only a year ago did she find out how bad I was."

"Now, Duke Damar, before witnesses I have confessed my sins, and those who have wronged you should hang their heads in shame."

"To your care, for I know your noble nature, I leave my poor wife, and I beg you to care for her."

"I will, as though she were my own sister, for I owe her my life."

"As for my father, Richard Rossmore, you can hang him, if you wish, and my mother should be sent to prison for life, for but for them, who should have taught me good, yet taught me evil, I would have been a different man. But my life is ending, and so let it be."

"Now leave me alone with my poor wife."

All did so, while Duke Damar stepped forward and said:

"Regis, I forgive you, as I hope Heaven may, and I will be as a brother to your wife."

One hour after Eva joined the group, pale, but calm, and said:

"My husband is dead."

His body was taken in the coach to Hank's Ranch and buried, and from there Buffalo Bill, Surgeon Powell and the others returned to the fort with the outlaw prisoners.

On the way Lone Dick tried to escape and was killed by the soldier sentinel.

When Ribbon Rob went East on his run he carried as passengers Duke Damar and Eva Rossmore, and two weeks after all at Sea Vale were startled to see the young master drive up to the door with a lady.

"Nellie, this is an adopted sister, and I wish you to be a sister to her also, for she needs all your love and sympathy," said Duke Damar.

And then he went to the room of Mrs. Regis, who was hastily dressing to receive him.

"My dear, dear Duke, I—"

"Silence, madam, for I know you as you are, and I wish to tell you that all your plans have failed. Your son, Regis Rossmore, is dead, and while dying confessed all. Your first husband is a prisoner and may hang, while I know that Nellie is not your child. I will place at my banker's a yearly allowance of one thousand dollars for you, no more. Now, leave this house, seek a home far from here, and never dare cross my path again, or I will send you to prison for life. You have just two hours to pack up, so do not delay."

And Duke Damar wheeled on his heel and left the room.

CHAPTER LVIII.

CONCLUSION.

To Nellie and May, who was still visiting at Sea Vale, Duke Damar told his story.

"Nellie, you shall still have the share father left you, for I will give it to you as a wedding-present, and you, Eva, shall have the fifty thousand left to Mrs. Regis, and this must be your home until some splendid fellow steals you from me," said Duke Damar.

And Eva, with no friends in the world, was glad to accept the offer made her.

Six months after the return of Duke Damar he brought May Malcolm to Sea Vale as its mistress, while Nellie became the wife of Andrew Malcolm, who bought a lovely home near the Damar estate.

Old Andrew Malcolm, who by the way was not much over fifty, found so much in common with Eva Rossmore, that he asked her to become his wife, and she consented, so had a haven of refuge at last.

Some six months after his marriage to May, Duke Damar was startled by seeing no less a person than his negro servant Spur walk into Sea Vale Hall.

"I wasn't kilt, sah, an' bein' a black man, ther Injuns wouldn't scalp me, so tuk me to their village and made me big black chief."

"I c'u'dn't git away nohow, Mars' Duke, but one day Massa Buffalo Bill, with Surgeon Powell, and a hundred sojers come dashin' inter ther red-skin city and dey rescued me, sah, praise de Lord, dey did."

Such was Spur's story, and the reader can well understand that he became a hero.

Among the congratulations which Damar had upon his marriage were three that greatly pleased him.

One was from Grizzly George, acknowledging a handsome souvenir in the way of a check, and wishing for him a long life of happiness.

The other two were from Surgeon Frank Powell and Buffalo Bill, and every good wish they sent to the one who had been their comrade on many a perilous trail.

In his letter the scout said:

"Those Desperado Detectives were both hanged, and I have not found another Double."

THE END.

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